

## CHAPTER XI

### FAIRS

THE London Fairs were both numerous and important. The most ancient date from a time when certain commodities could be brought to the fair, and exposed for sale, which could not be brought there at any other time. Thus at the great fairs of Winchester, Chester, Stourbridge, and other country fairs the merchants from London and elsewhere brought goods which the people could not buy at any other time, because there were no shops at which everything could be got all the year round. Thus at Winchester, every year, the whole country-side gathered together to welcome the merchants who flocked thither from all quarters. The booths or stalls were ranged in streets; the trade of the city was suspended; the government of the city passed into the hands of the Bishop, and for a fortnight the fair was carried on.

The fairs of London did not generally last so long, nor were they important, for the simple reason that they were not so much wanted. Thus the Fair of St. Bartholomew. This fair was proclaimed, that is, opened, on the Eve of St. Bartholomew, and it continued for two days after. The fair itself was to be held within the precincts of the Priory, to which the tolls had been given, and it was a cloth fair.

The whole reason for holding the fair at all was the sale of cloth. When the fair was first instituted the manufacture of cloth, except of a very coarse and common kind, was not carried on in this country. The people wore a cloth of warm make, but it was not the fine cloth manufactured by the "drapiers" of Bruges, Ghent, and Ypres. That was brought over in the fine summer weather in time for the fairs of England—for St. Bartholomew's in August; St. Giles's, Winchester, in September; for Stourbridge also in September. The fair was then a perfectly serious commercial institution; the cloth merchants exhibited their wares within the precincts of the Priory; at night the gates were closed; the Prior received the tolls. But outside the Priory, in the open space of West Smithfield, where the horse races were held and criminals were hanged, among the ponds and elms of that open area, another fair grew up; a fair at first tolerated and then compelled to pay tolls to the

City; a fair where whole streets of booths exhibited things of every kind for sale; a fair at which amusements, shows, feats of skill and cunning, dancing, singing, mumming, music, feasting, gambling, and drinking went on all day and all night during the three days of the fair. When the English cloth began to be as good as the Flemish that reason for its existence was gone, because good cloth could be purchased all the year round. It then became a place, so far as the trading part was concerned, at which lace, gold and silver things, jewellery, and fineries of every kind were exposed for sale. People of fashion, however, came less often to the fair, and the better sort of trade disappeared. Thus the booths contained toys, walking sticks, buckles and buttons, hosiery, second-hand clothes, gingerbread, and things to eat and drink. These are the stages of a fair:—First, its staple; next, its general trade; thirdly, its appeal to children and the lower class. All this time its shows and amusements are growing more and more the principal object of the fair.

Many names are associated with Bartholomew Fair. It was on the opening day of the fair, on the eve of St. Bartholomew, that the merchants and the mummers witnessed a sight at the hearing of which the ears tingle and the cheek grows hot, even after all these years; for on that August day was William Wallace dragged on his back by the tails of horses to the elms at Smithfield. There, amidst the acclamations of the multitude, to whom the renowned Scottish knight was a monster, he was taken from the horses and hanged upon the gallows, to be cut down while still living and disembowelled before the whole people. Was there any who had pity on him? Not one, I think. The people had been told terrible things of his cruelties. They looked on, and they applauded. And as soon as the show was over, they turned to their other shows, and to the guitar and the singing-woman.

Morley, in his history of Bartholomew Fair, says that the business of the fair did not begin till the Mayor had read the proclamation. My own recollection of a similar custom in another town is, that when the Mayor had placed a white glove on a pole before the Guildhall, the fair technically began; but it really began on the morning of the first day, and that this was the case with the Smithfield Fair I feel sure.

By time-honoured custom wrestling for prizes was held on St. Bartholomew's Day; on the day following there was shooting.

Ben Jonson's name is for ever connected with the fair. In his immortal play we can learn the kind of trade, the amusements, the trading folk, the visitors, the show folk, the magistrates of the Pie Powder Court, and all the humours of the fair. There were hobby-horses, gingerbread, ballads, mouse-traps, purses, pouches, pin-cases, pipes, singing birds, toys, dogs, velvet caps, tobacco, trinkets, and so on. And all the shows and the feasting off roast pig, and the villainies and the cut-purses and the fools—are they not written in Ben Jonson's play?

It seems surprising that Cromwell did not suppress the fair; the theatre, indeed, was suppressed, but not the fair, nor the other shows. It was impossible, in fact, to suppress the merriment and joyousness of youth. The prohibition of the theatre was evaded in many ways. One Robert Cox, for instance, wrote "drolls" which were acted under the name of rope-dancing; yet actors were liable to be publicly whipped and their audience to be fined five shillings apiece. The general feeling of the country was in their favour; Lady Holland was not the only person of condition who secretly harboured actors.

There were wonders and wild beasts exhibited at the fair: a camel in 1650; a girl without any bones in 1667,—this was at the sign of the Shoe and Slap; the dancing mare; the child born back to back with a live bear; the quack and the mountebank; the giant and the dwarf; the double girl; the man with one head and two bodies; the man whose body was only 21 inches high, but his arms of the ordinary length; the grimacing Spaniard; the fairy, a hundred and fifty years of age; the hermaphrodite; the German woman without hands or feet; the transparent child; the child with three legs.

It was not to be expected that the facetious Ned Ward would neglect the opportunity presented by the fair for his lively pen. He describes the place in 1699. There are the actors in their tinsel and finery strutting about on the platform outside the theatres; the merry-andrew with his unclean jests; the rabble looking on; the rope-dancers in their booth, where the women stood on their heads and the girls on the rope doffed their petticoats; the booth where they played a droll called the "Devil of a Wife," but so clumsily that the writer amused himself by guessing their daily trades. "I fancied, while they were playing, that I heard some of 'em crying *Flay Brooms*, some *Knives to Grind*, and others *Chimney Sweep*; while their ladies were making up concert with *Buy my Cucumbers to Pickle*, and *Here's your rare Holland Socks, four pair for a Shilling*." They think of getting some roast pig, but the dirt and stench of the cook-shops drive them out; they repair to a theatre and see Doggett in a play about Friar Balm and the Devil; they visit a waxwork show and a music booth; they notice the merry-go-rounds, called by them whirligigs; they see puppet shows; they go into raffling shops; and they find out a gambling den.

The following is a picture, in tolerably bad verse, of Bartholomew's Fair in 1762. It was written by George Alexander Stevens:—

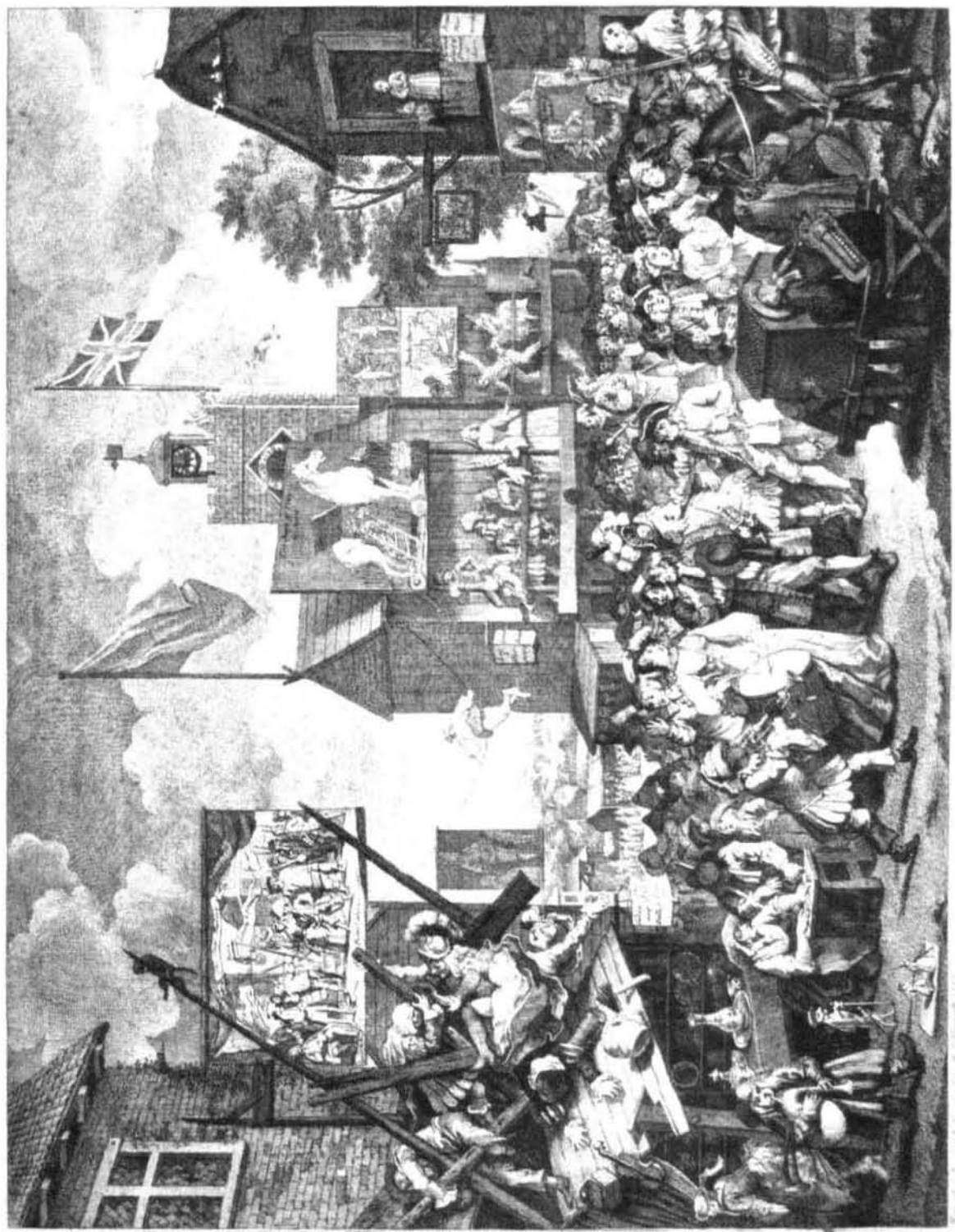
"Here was, first of all, crowds against other crowds driving,  
Like wind and tide meeting, each contrary striving;  
Shrill fiddling, sharp fighting, and shouting and shrieking  
Fifes, trumpets, drums, bagpipes, and barrow-girls squeaking,  
'Come, my rare round and sound, here's choice of fine ware,'  
Though all was not sound sold at Bartholomew Fair.  
There was drolls, hornpipe-dancing, and showing of postures,  
With frying black-puddings, and opening of oysters;

With salt-boxes, solo's, and gallery folks squawling ;  
 The tap-house guests roaring, and mouth-pieces bawling ;  
 Pimps, pawnbrokers, strollers, fat landladies, sailors,  
 Bawds, baillies, jilts, jockeys, thieves, tumblers, and taylors ;  
 Here's Punch's whole play of the Gunpowder Plot,  
 Wild beasts all alive, and pease-pudding all hot,  
 Fine sausages fried, and the black on the wire ;  
 The whole court of France, and nice pig at the fire ;  
 Here's the up-and-downs, who'll take a seat in the chair ?  
 Tho' there's more up-and-downs than at Bartelmew Fair,  
 Here's Whittington's cat, and the tall dromedary,  
 The chaise without horses, and Queen of Hungary ;  
 Here's the merry-go-rounds, 'Come, who rides ; come, who rides, Sir ?  
 Wine, beer, ale, and cakes, fire-eating besides, sir,  
 The fam'd learned dog, that can tell all his letters ;  
 And some men, as scholars, are not much his betters."

In the Rowlandson-Pugin series of pictures is one of Bartholomew Fair, published by Ackerman in 1808. The time is evening ; the moon is struggling through the clouds ; the tower of St. Bartholomew-the-Great is visible on the right beyond the Hospital, of which a small part only is shown ; the fair is lit up by a blaze of light from the shows. Of these the most important is Richardson's Theatre. Three or four of the actors are strutting about on the platform and the people are streaming up the steps. The theatre is decorated outside with green and pink hangings and yellow columns striped with red. Behind it is another show of a smaller kind, probably exhibiting contortionists and tight-rope dancers, one of whom is standing on his head to give the people a taste of the wonders within. Then follows another theatre of humbler pretensions ; the whole company apparently are exhibiting themselves outside. Lastly, there is a wild beast show with the usual pictures outside. The front of the picture is an animated scene filled with hundreds of figures. There is the merry-go-round propelled by men, not by steam, and furnished with sedan-chairs for the ladies as well as hobby-horses for the men ; there is the woman with the roulette table ; there is the woman frying sausages ; there is the apple-woman with her barrow ; there is the woman with her pack-ass laden with fruit ; the ballad singer ; the milk woman ; the oyster woman. Here are the swings ; here there is a fight ; here there is the fellow with his arms round the girl ; here the fiddler with his dancers ; here—one knows not why—march two soldiers playing fife and drum followed by an officer with a drawn sword. The picture is full of life, movement, and noise. The artist has omitted the drink, of which there was plenty, and he has omitted the lines of booths and stalls.

After the Restoration the fair was extended from three to fourteen days. In 1708 it was again reduced to three days. In 1769 the Mayor endeavoured to keep some order by appointing 72 special constables ; he also prohibited the performance of plays and stopped the gambling tables. The most lawless acts of violence, robbery, and even murder continued at the fair. It is sometimes stated that the fair gradually dwindled away to nothing. The dwindling had not begun in 1828,





SOUTHWARK FAIR  
From the engraving by Hogarth

when the receipts of the various shows prove that a very large sum of money—£4855—was spent in sixpenny and threepenny admission fees for the shows alone, of which there are enumerated sixteen.

The theatrical history of the fair is curious, but I cannot find space for it here. The Drury Lane Company always sent a detachment to perform at the fair. Penkethman, the popular comedian, played at the fair, where he had his own booth. Doggett, when manager of Drury Lane, had his booth at the fair. Elkanah Settle wrote for the fair. Cibber, Mrs. Pritchard, Yates, and Shuter were among the actors at the fair. Gay's *Beggar's Opera* was played at the fair. Henry Fielding is said by Morley to have been the proprietor or joint manager of a theatrical booth for nine years. It is strange that this generally careful historian did not remember there might be more than one Fielding living at any time. He confuses Henry Fielding the novelist, dramatist, and magistrate with one Timothy Fielding, an actor.

The fair lasted in full swing through the eighteenth century: it became, however, an intolerable nuisance: in 1798 it was proposed to abolish it. For thirty years longer it continued. Then the Corporation took strong measures. They doubled the rent of the ground. Then the shows disappeared. The fair dragged on with a few merry-go-rounds and two or three ginger-bread stalls. In 1855 it was proclaimed for the last time.

The other fairs of London of less importance may be passed over with a few words for each.

The fair of Westminster was founded, in the year 1248, by Henry III., with the suicidal intention of damaging the City of London and setting up a rival to her trade.

The citizens redeemed their liberty of trade for £2000. The fair, however, continued: first in St. Margaret's Churchyard, and afterwards in Tothill Fields.

St. Katherine's Hospital had also the right of holding a fair every year. This is commonly called the Tower Hill Fair; but it was held outside the walls, "opposite to the Abbey of Graces," or Eastminster.

In the year 1462 Edward IV. granted a charter for the holding of a fair in Southwark on the 7th, 8th, and 9th days of September. This fair, next in importance to Bartholomew Fair, was called the Lady Fair. Hogarth's picture seems to tell us all that need be told about the fair. To be sure he presents the more cheerful side of a fair: that the stage gives way and the unfortunate actors are thrown sprawling is meant as a comic episode. Beneath the stage is a drinking crib; a brazen-faced and handsome damsel beats the drum and bawls the name of the piece they are to act; a couple of country lads gaze stupidly into her face; here is a man with a peep-show; here is a waxwork show; here another theatre; here is the master of fence; here is the flying man. But this is by daylight. At night

there was another scene, which even Hogarth did not venture to paint. It was abolished in 1762 by an order of the Court of Common Council.

A fair, the memory of which has almost perished, was held on the site which afterwards became St. James's Market. That too is now gone. The centre of the fair, however, was that ground now occupied by St. Philip's Church, Waterloo Place.

The fair was granted to the Leper Hospital of St. James, which preceded St. James's Palace, in the year 1290, to be kept on St. James's Day, the 25th of July—at first for six days, but afterwards for fifteen days. All the London fairs became the haunt of every form of vice and villainy; but, for some reason unknown, that of St. James's surpassed the rest. It was suppressed by Parliament in 1651; it was restored in 1660. In 1661 it is recorded that the fair was held for the usual time, but that "many lewd and infamous persons" were taken and committed to the House of Correction. In 1664 it was suppressed, but revived again, and again suppressed.

May Fair was held every year in the month of May. I do not find any mention of a charter or foundation of the fair. It seems to have originated in the sport of May Day in the fields called Brookfields, through which ran the Tyburn stream. The Fair lasted sixteen days: the first three days were days of serious trade, namely, in cattle and leather; the rest of the time was devoted to amusements, with the lines of booths, the theatres, and the shows, which in disgust were transferred to Smithfield. There were continual complaints of disorderly behaviour at the fair. It was abolished in the year 1708 in consequence of a Grand Jury presentment:—

"That, being sensible of their duty, to make presentment of such matters and things that were public enormities and inconveniences, and being encouraged by the example of the worthy magistracy of the City of London in their late proceedings against Bartholomew Fair, did present, as a public nuisance and inconvenience, the yearly riotous and tumultuous assembly in a place called Brookfield, in the parish of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, called May Fair. In which place many loose, idle, and disorderly persons did rendezvous, draw, and allure young persons, servants, and others to meet there to game and commit lewdness," etc.

It was revived a few years later, and continued till the year 1760, when it was finally abolished.

There remain the fairs of the suburbs within our limits. There were fairs at Stepney, Greenwich, Charlton, Camberwell, and Peckham. The fair of Stepney was of late date: it was granted by Charles II. in 1664. Greenwich Fair was of ancient origin. It was celebrated on Whit Monday; and as that day is the greatest holiday of the year to Londoners, Greenwich Fair was always a place of resort. It possessed the double attraction of a fair with the usual accompaniments, and a park with a hill down which the young people used to run hand in hand screaming. The dancing-booths of Greenwich were more famous than the theatres. I remember visiting Greenwich Fair as a boy, but I do not remember at the fair Richardson's

Theatre, of which I have a distinct remembrance at Portsdown and Portsmouth Fairs. The noise and disorders of the place caused its suppression.

Horn Fair, Charlton, has also been suppressed, I suppose, from a similar cause. It was held on the 18th of October, St. Luke's Day. Everybody who went there carried a horn, not knowing in the least why. The reason was that in pictures representing St. Luke a horned ox's head was always placed at the corner. Camberwell Fair was held from the 9th to the 30th of August; and Peckham followed, I think, with a fair of a week.

It will now be seen that the London citizen, from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century, had many opportunities of spending his time and his money in the riot and debauchery of the fair. Thus, on the first fortnight in May, he would begin the season with May Fair. On Whit Monday, there was Greenwich. At the end of July there was St. James's for three weeks. Early in August, Camberwell Green invited his assistance; on the 23rd there began the three delirious days of Bartholomew; then came distant Peckham; the Lady Fair was held on the 7th, 8th and the 9th of September; Tothill Fair began on the 13th of October and lasted three weeks; and Horn Fair joyously closed the season. I have not counted Stepney, because it was never a great fair; nor Croydon nor Barnet, which are outside our limits. Nor have I included "Gooseberry Fair"—the row of booths and shows and theatres which were allowed to stand along Tottenham Court Road before it was built upon. There were no fewer than eighty-two days between the beginning of May and the end of October which might be spent at fairs.



CRIME, POLICE, JUSTICE, DEBTORS' PRISONS

## CHAPTER I

### THE MOB

IN the eighteenth century the power and the unruly condition of the London mob, which had been steadily increasing with the population and extent of the City, became absolutely intolerable. Yet an efficient police was not established till well on in the next century. I will here consider some of the stories of violence and turbulence connected with the rule of the mob, whenever, which was not seldom, the mob for a while got its own way.

As regards the alleged villainies of "Mohocks and Hawkabites," they did not belong to the mob, but to the better (!) class. Besides, these acts were altogether due to imagination and to terror: no one, in spite of large rewards offered, was ever produced who could show a nose flattened or slit, or the bare place where the ears once had been. Yet what was the condition of the town when such things were readily believed? The disorders, however, which really occurred were sufficiently serious, one would think, to keep the friends of order in constant alarm. For instance, upon the accession of George I., the mob, for some reason or other, presumably because the king could make no pretence at all to be an Englishman or to speak English—yet how did they know that?—and perhaps because all foreigners alike in the eyes of the Londoner were despicable creatures, chose to take every opportunity—as the birthdays, accession days, coronation days, and so forth, while their betters were going off to hear services and to attend banquets—to insult, deride, and revile His Majesty. When this had been going on for some time, and showed no prospect of abatement, some of the citizens, friends of the Government, formed themselves into a very remarkable association; for they repaired every night to certain "mug-houses," where nothing but ale was called for, and there they drank, sang, and listened to the tuneful notes of a harp, prepared at a moment's notice to go out and meet the mob. When the mob, in fact, became disorderly in the streets, these valiant sons of harmony sallied forth to fight them. For the better success of the sally, every mug-house was provided with good stout cudgels, and plenty of them. With the help of these cudgels, they generally succeeded in dispersing the crowd.

It must be understood, however, that the mob carried cudgels as well. No Londoner likes to put up tamely with a broken head, and bruises in other parts, not to speak of defeat. The army of disorder, therefore, although routed, resolved on revenge: they came out one fine evening in July, many thousands strong, armed with their cudgels, and they attacked one of the mug-houses—that in Salisbury Court, Fleet Street. The landlord, defending his premises, killed one of them. However, they got into the house, and wrecked it completely before assistance came. In the fight which ensued, many of the rioters were taken prisoners before the rest fled. Five of the prisoners were tried, condemned, and executed. To make the execution more effective, it was carried out in Fleet Street itself, opposite the house which they had attacked. The historian goes on to say that this hanging stopped the tumults in the streets. For my own part, considering how little the Tyburn hangings were able to effect towards the repression of crime, I like to think that the cudgels of the gentle mug-house associates played a greater part than Mr. Ketch's rope in discouraging the rabble from seditious displays in the open street.

Even when the constables had got their prisoner, they were not always able to keep him. Thus, take the remarkable case of James Buchanan. He was a sailor, one of the crew of the *Royal Guardian*, East Indiaman. While that vessel lay in the Canton River, in the East Indies, James Buchanan had the misfortune to murder—one knows not how or why—the fourth mate, Mr. Smith. Instead of trying him and hanging him on the spot, they laid him in irons and brought him home, and so, after a long voyage, he was brought before a magistrate, who committed him for trial and clapped him into Newgate. In due time he was tried, and, being found guilty, was condemned to be hanged at Execution Dock, Wapping, and his body to remain while three tides flowed over it, after which, being properly painted over with pitch, it was to adorn the Isle of Dogs. On the 20th day of December, therefore, he was conducted in the cart from Newgate to the place of execution, and having arrived there, he duly ascended the ladder and was turned off. But he had not been hanging more than five minutes—five and twenty was generally allowed for a sufficient hanging—when a gang of sailors “rushed” the gallows, cut down the convict, and carried him off down the river. James Buchanan escaped, it was said, and found a shelter in France. I doubt very much whether the hospitality of France was extended to James the half hanged. Rather I should have looked for him in the slums of Gosport or Bristol.

Another riot of sailors proves not only that the City was villainously policed, but that the spirit of the citizens, after the mug-house associations, fell shamefully into decay. Formerly, the cry of “Prentices” would, in a few moments, bring a crowd of young fellows upon the scene, armed with clubs. We have seen how the citizens in the mug-house riots assembled and dispersed the mob. In the case before us, which occurred later in the century, neither the citizens themselves, nor the constables,

nor the 'prentices, interfered. Perhaps, however, this was because the riot happened outside the City.

The riot took place in the Strand, within easy reach of whatever force either the City or Westminster had at its disposal. Two sailors, thinking themselves ill-used at a certain disorderly house in the Strand, called the Crown, near the "new church," *i.e.* St. Mary le Strand, went off vowing revenge. They presently returned with a party of their fellows, all armed, who proceeded to wreck the house: they smashed the furniture, cut the feather-beds to pieces, tore up all the wearing apparel, turned the women who belonged to the house stark naked into the streets, and broke all the windows. All this work takes time. Destruction, if it is sailor-like and thorough, requires some order and method. One would think that the alarm might have been given. It was, but too late. After an interval, which allowed the sailors to make a praiseworthy and thorough job of it, a company of Guards arrived at last upon the spot. They were sent from the Tilt Yard, Whitehall, but when they arrived the mischief was done. The Strand, to be sure, is outside the City; yet surely there were constables at Westminster. The next night the rioters came again and destroyed another house in the Strand; the third night they attacked a house in the Old Bailey. We thus find three houses on three successive nights attacked by the same band of rioters and no attempt made to stop them. On the fourth night, it is true, troops were sent to patrol the streets. But where were the constables on the three nights before? And why were not the young citizens of Westminster to the front like the mug-house associations?

The necessary sequel to this riot—a hanging—was marked by one of those admirable instances of courage and self-possession on the part of a city dignitary, of which the annals of London preserve so many. Among a batch of fifteen prisoners ordered for execution shortly after the riot, was a young man named Bosavern Penlez, one of those apprehended in the Strand. A great number of sailors assembled tumultuously at the gallows waiting for the carts containing the criminals and resolved upon rescuing Penlez. In order to defeat this object a company of Foot Guards were placed at Holborn Bars as escort. But on arriving at the Bars, Mr. Janssen, who was on horseback, dismissed the soldiers, stating that he had provided a sufficient body of constables, and conducted the malefactors to the place of execution, surrounded, as it was, by the sailors. The courage and determination of the sheriff and the presence of his constables—it is not stated how they were armed—damped the ardour of these rebels; they received from the sheriff a promise that their friend's body should not be handed over to the surgeons, and they drew off making no further opposition to the execution. One applauds the sheriff, but feels sorry for the disappointment of Bosavern Penlez.

A story which belongs to a few years later shows plainly enough that, though energetic action might restore for a time, there was no efficient means of maintaining



order permanently. Thus the suppression of the mug-house riots was followed for a time by quiet in the streets; gradually, however, the rogues and thieves, looking abroad, and seeing no one about to keep order, came out and began to make their presence and their mode of life felt by the bourgeois. Not only in the City, but also at Westminster, street robberies began to abound. But nothing was done until a certain person—*innominatus*—doomed to obscurity—confessed, while lying under sentence of death, that he had been one of a gang who intended to rob the Queen on her way after supper from the City to St. James's. They would set upon her in St. Paul's Churchyard, where there was room for operating, and where there were lanes in all directions convenient for flight. Unfortunately they were so busy in robbing Sir Gilbert Heathcote, Alderman, while he was returning from the House of Commons in his coach, that they were too late for Her Majesty. One regrets the failure of this scheme which, had it been carried out, would have been a picturesque adventure and one worthy of the attention of Harrison Ainsworth. Very strong representations were made by Lord Townshend to the Mayor upon the condition of the City, with the result that many poor rogues, probably no worse than their neighbours, were carried out to be hanged, and that the streets were again cleared of them for a short time.

The riots which belonged to elections may be passed over here; the word election in the last century meant one continual riot from the beginning to the end. Of street fights, of fighting among men of the same trade, of street quarrels, it is only necessary to say that every day and all day long there were fights. The journeyman of every trade, the fellowship porter, the stevedore, the carter, the waggoner, the driver, the sailor, the waterman, went out every morning with the knowledge or the confident expectation that he would be probably involved in a fight with some one before he got home again. Nor was the fighting confined to the lower classes: gentlemen carried into the streets a stout walking-stick, which was found far more useful than a sword; the younger men of all classes were ready with their fists. It was sometimes necessary to correct, in a summary fashion, the bully who shoved the man he met into the road, and took the wall of everybody; it was better to treat the pickpocket and the footpad with a heavy cudgelling and perhaps a ducking under the pump than to send him to prison. In every crowded thoroughfare there were all day long the hasty quarrel, the oaths and blasphemies of disputants, the fight in the ring promptly formed, either with fists or with cudgels, the blocking of the street till the ordeal by battle had been decided.

The rioters were not always of the lower class. Drury Lane once experienced a very disagreeable reminder that the player folk are always, and in an especial manner, regarded as the servants of the public, who will brook no breaking of contracts and promises. On this occasion two of the principal dancers announced for the performance did not appear. Thereupon the boxes and the pit—not the gallery

apparently—rose in wrath. They pulled up the seats and the flooring; they tore down the hangings; they broke down the partitions; they smashed the glasses and the sconces; they destroyed the instruments in the orchestra; they cut the curtains to pieces; and they broke into the Green Room and wrecked that.

Some of the outbursts were trade riots, in which we recognise the survival of the old corporate spirit among craftsmen, and the first faint glimmerings of the modern trade unionism. Thus in the year 1739 the silk weavers of Spitalfields assembled before the house of a certain master-weaver suspected of entering into a combination with other masters to make the men wind their silk without extra pay. They marked their sense of this intention by wrecking the house. The riot was so threatening that the Mayor called out the Guards from the Tower. Why could not the constables with the help of the young men suppress that riot? But the Guards came, the Riot Act was read, the crowd did not disperse; therefore the soldiers charged them, and arrested a great many, who were brought before the magistrates. It is not stated that any were killed in this affair, but the soldiers suffered from the tiles and bricks that were hurled upon them from the roofs of the houses. We hear of the weavers again, in the year 1764, when many thousands of them were assembled in Moorfields and very peaceably marched to Westminster.

Having presented their petition the weavers went home and sat down to await its effect. As nothing seemed to come of it, they tried to get at the King. A number of journeymen weavers, accompanied by their wives and children, marched with a black flag to St. James's. They found that the King had gone to Richmond. Many of them, therefore, went on to Richmond, when one of the lords-in-waiting told them that His Majesty would do all in his power for them.

Again the weavers gave trouble. It was two years later. They were divided into engine weavers and narrow weavers. The latter found their earnings rapidly becoming less in consequence of the quantity which the engine weavers could put upon the market—some six times as much as the others. The riot, in fact, was exactly like those that occurred in the North of England later on when steam was introduced into the factory. The narrow weavers anticipated the action of their grandchildren by attempting to destroy all the engines. They assembled on Saffron Hill with blunderbusses, swords, and pistols. Happily, however, the Lord Mayor proved equal to the emergency and the rioters were dispersed.

The pageants or processions with which the mob were accustomed to proclaim their sentiments belong especially to the eighteenth century. When Lord Bute was in power they carried a jack-boot through the streets and burned it on a bonfire. When the mob were more than usually Protestant they carried the Pope through the streets with a Devil, a Jesuit or two, and a few priests, and threw them all upon a bonfire.

On the 12th of February 1769 a cavalcade of merchants and tradesmen of the

City of London, in coaches, on their way to St. James's with a loyal address, was interrupted by a desperate mob on passing through the City, who insulted, pelted, and maltreated the principal conductors; so that several coaches were obliged to withdraw, some to turn back, others to proceed by by-ways, and those who arrived at St. James's were so bedaubed with dirt, and shattered, that both masters and drivers had been in the utmost terror for their lives.

The rioters carried their outrages within the Palace gates. Lord Talbot on this occasion behaved with unparalleled intrepidity, and though he had his staff of office broken in his hand, he secured two of the most active among the rioters when deserted by his own servants. His example animated the military, who, without employing either guns or bayonets to destroy the deluded populace, secured fifteen of them, to be dealt with according to law. Mr. Boehm, to whom the address was entrusted, was so severely handled that he was obliged to quit his coach and take shelter in Nando's Coffee-house. His coach was rifled, but the address escaped; it was, however, with some difficulty recovered by the addressers, which occasioned a disagreeable delay at St. James's, where those who had arrived in safety remained in the greatest anxiety.

In April 1771 the mob marched through the streets with two carts and a hearse. In the first cart were four fellows got up to represent certain unpopular characters. When they got to Tower Hill, they pretended to cut off the head of one and put the body in the hearse. The second cart contained stuffed figures, which, after they had been beheaded, were thrown upon a bonfire. The whole ceremony was conducted with bawling and shouting and rough music and a good deal of fighting.

The same procession was repeated a few days later. In this case, however, there was a gallows and a hangman, and three figures cut in pasteboard hanging. Men in the crowd bawled their last dying speech and confession, and one man being observed in the act of taking down their names, which were written on the back of the figures, was seized as a spy and ducked in the Tower ditch till he was nearly dead.

In 1768 a halfpenny loaf adorned with mourning crape was nailed up at the Royal Exchange as a reflection on the high price of bread and other provisions.

On the 12th of February 1779 the news reached London that Admiral Keppel had been acquitted by court-martial of the charges brought against him by Sir Hugh Palliser. The cause of Admiral Keppel had been warmly espoused by the London mob, in consequence of which there were great demonstrations. All the windows in the principal streets of London and Westminster were illuminated; the bells of several churches were rung; guns were fired; the mob broke open Sir Hugh Palliser's house, smashed all the windows and destroyed the furniture; they did the same thing for Lord George Germaine's house; they broke the windows at the Admiralty, where they made a bonfire of the sedan chairs standing in the street, and they attacked the houses of Lord North and Captain Hood. They also carried

about an effigy of Sir Hugh Palliser, suspended by the neck, which they afterwards burned.

The hat dyers of Southwark having begun a strike, found that one of their fraternity was breaking the rules by taking too little pay for working over hours. They accordingly rode him on a donkey through the Borough, where hatters were employed, and also through some streets in the City, with a troop of boys playing "rough music" with shovels. They carried a placard on a pole before the culprit denoting his offence, and on the way they made all journeymen hatters swear to obey the strike.

Here are further notes on the turbulence and riot of the mob during this century. Thus, in 1760 (not to follow any chronological order), it became for a time the favourite amusement of the mob to collect on Ludgate Hill and there to pretend to be fighting with each other. This gave them an opportunity of assaulting all the passengers, not with the view of robbery, but simply from their love of banging and beating.

The following is a specimen of mob justice. Let us acknowledge that the mob could be just in a rough sort of way. Two women whose character was, if one may so put it, beyond any reasonable doubt, and below any chance of suspicion, met a gentleman staggering about the streets very drunk indeed; they therefore bore down upon him, greeted him in a friendly way, even lovingly, took him by the arm tenderly, one on either side, and so began to lead him away to their own lodging, where the poor dear gentleman would be able to sleep off the effects of his wine. Sometimes, as I have said, the London mob could assume the character of virtue. They did so on this occasion: they rose in their majesty; they asked each other if this good gentleman should be openly taken to a house where he would most certainly be robbed; they therefore forcibly rescued the gentleman and carried off the women to the Chequers Inn hard by. In the yard of that inn there was a horsepond; in this they ducked the women. Now it must be disagreeable to be ducked even in a fresh and running stream, but to be ducked in the horsepond of an inn-yard must be more than disagreeable. However, while the ladies were enjoying themselves in the horsepond, a journeyman cutler, unfortunately for himself passed by. He virtuously joined in the demonstration, and began to lend active assistance to those who were conducting the punishment. Now, whether from some tender handling of the patients by the new-comer, or from some other cause, the mob, quite without grounds, assumed that the cutler was their bully or protector and was trying to let them go. So they ducked him as well as the two culprits. Then came along, still more unfortunately, the journeyman cutler's wife, and she made so extraordinary a clamour over their ungentle treatment of her husband that they ducked her as well.

Consider, next, the riots with which Wilkes's first return for Middlesex was welcomed.



He surrendered himself (see also p. 24) ; he was committed to the King's Bench Prison ; the mob seized his carriage, took out the horses, turned out the two tipstaves who were in the carriage with Wilkes, and drew the carriage all the way from Westminster Hall through the City to Spitalfields, where Wilkes prevailed upon them to retire ; he then drove to Southwark and surrendered. Next day an immense crowd surrounded the King's Bench Prison ; they tore up the wooden palings round it and made a bonfire ; and they made the people of the Borough, under threats of wrecking their houses, illuminate the windows. This was on the 27th of April. On the 10th of May there was another and a far worse riot :—

"A great body of people assembled about the King's Bench Prison, in expectation that Mr. Wilkes was to go from thence to the Parliament House (it being the first day of opening the new Parliament), and designing to convey him thither. They demanded him at the prison, and grew very tumultuous ; whereupon the Riot Act was begun to be read, but the populace threw stones and brick-bats while it was reading, when William Allen, son of Mr. Allen, master of the Horse-shoe Inn, in Blackman Street, Southwark, being singled out, was pursued by the soldiers, and shot dead on the spot. Soon after this, the crowd increasing, an additional number of the Guards was sent for, who marched thither, and also a party of Horse Grenadiers ; when, the riot continuing, the mob was fired upon by the soldiers, and five were killed on the spot and about fifteen wounded. Two women were among the wounded, one of whom afterwards died in St. Thomas's Hospital. The next day an inquisition was taken by the coroner for Surrey on the body of the above William Allen, when a verdict was given by the jury that Donald Maclane was guilty of wilful murder, and Donald Maclaury, and Alexander Murray, the commanding officer, were aiding and abetting therein. This inquest was held at the house of Mr. Allen ; and it appeared on the examination that the deceased was only a spectator, and on seeing some persons run, he ran also, but was unhappily mistaken, and followed by the soldiers five hundred yards, into a cow-house, where he was shot. Donald Maclane was committed to prison for the murder, but his associates were admitted to bail. Two inquisitions were afterwards taken in the borough on persons killed by the soldiers in quelling the above riot : one on the body of Mary Jeffs, who having a basket of oranges to sell, was shot dead in removing them ; the other on William Bridgeman, who was shot on the top of a hay cart as he was looking at the fray at a distance ; on both these inquisitions the jury brought in their verdict, chance medley. It appeared by the evidence that on the justices taking down a paper that had been fixed against a wall of the prison, the mob grew riotous, and cried out 'Give us the paper' ; which the justices not regarding, stones began to be thrown, and the cry 'Give us the paper' grew louder ; the drums beat to arms ; the proclamation was read ; the justices were pelted who read it ; great pains were taken to persuade the people to disperse ; the Horse Guards were sent for, and it was not till the last extremity that the soldiers received orders to fire. Maclane was afterwards tried at the Surrey assizes held at Guildford, and acquitted.

The next day the mob assembled before the house of Edward Russel, Esq., distiller, in the borough, broke open the door, staved some casks of liquor, drank it immoderately, and began pulling down the house ; but the military interposing, some of the most intoxicated were seized, and the rest made their escape. At the same time the front of the house of Richard Capel, Esq., in Bermondsey, was demolished, and Mr. Capel himself wounded. These outrages were occasioned by the activity of the above two gentlemen in suppressing the tumults in St. George's Fields."

At the same time there were other riots. The coal-heavers rose in a large body and struck, and went on board the colliers, obliging the men to quit their work. The sailors also joined in refusing to sail without an increase of wages. They boarded the ships which were preparing to sail ; they unrigged the vessels and drew away

the crews; they assembled in St. George's Fields and proceeded to St. James's Palace, where they presented a petition to the King. These men were dismissed with a promise of inquiry, which was afterwards duly held, and the men's wages were increased.

The coal-heavers were less fortunate: they obtained the signature of the masters at the wharves consenting to a rise of wages. They then laid the document before the Lord Mayor, who refused to receive it.

"A terrible fray happened on the 25th between the coal-heavers and sailors belonging to the colliers in the river, in which many were killed. The sailors, having been long detained in the river by the coal-heavers refusing to work, had begun to deliver their ships themselves; upon which a body of coal-heavers fell upon some of the sailors by surprise, and killed several of them. The sailors took the alarm, the quarrel became general, and the consequences were the loss of many lives.

On the 7th of June another fray happened in Stepney Fields between the same parties, when several of the sailors were killed. The coal-heavers marched off in triumph, with colours flying, drums beating, etc., offering five guineas for a sailor's head. The ships below Bridge were obliged to keep constant watch day and night; and to so great a height was this insurrection got, that the inhabitants of Wapping were perpetually under the most dreadful apprehensions. A party of Guards constantly attended for some days, during which several disturbances arose, and many coal-heavers were taken up by the soldiery and carried before Sir John Fielding, who, on examination, committed them to Newgate. Two of them were afterwards tried at the Old Bailey for the murder of one Battie, a seaman, and being convicted, were executed at Tyburn. Seven others were also executed in the Sun-tavern-fields (near where the riot was committed) for shooting at Mr. Green, the master of the Round-about-tavern in Shadwell. These examples produced the wished-for effect; the tumults immediately ceased, and peace and industry were happily restored."

It was, indeed, a period when the ancient mode of preserving order proved totally inefficient. The development in London of a vast mob, brutal, uneducated, yet sufficiently intelligent to understand the strength of common action, rendered the former mode of preserving order antiquated and inadequate. The alderman in his ward had been able to summon all good men and true to his assistance: what was the good of that power when the good men and true had abandoned the practice of carrying arms and the habit of using them, when the 'prentices no longer carried clubs, and when the disorderly persons were a company numbered by thousands, bent on the destruction and the plundering of houses and property?

However, before the Wilkes's Riots, as far back as the year 1744, the insolence and daring of the London criminal class attained to so great a height, while their numbers so largely increased, that it became imperative to attempt something for the restoration of order. The streets were simply no longer safe even in open day: men armed with cutlasses, pistols, and bludgeons, attacked St. Martin's Round House and gave arms to the prisoners within, who then carried on an attack from within as well as without. The Horse Guards dispersed them and took four of them prisoners. This was actually at eleven o'clock in the morning. Sturdy rogues such as these openly defied the deputy marshal and the peace officers; they ran out of the City into the country to get out of the way when they were 'wanted';

they fearlessly came back again; they rescued their comrades; they lay in wait for headboroughs and peace officers in the courts and alleys, and slashed at them in the open streets with cutlasses; they made some of them take refuge in Bridewell; others they visited at their houses and made them swear not to do their duty. The Corporation addressed the King on this condition of things, though it seems to have been perfectly within their power to provide for their own order. It seems wonderful that no one, all this time, should have thought of a street patrol by day. However, the Government took steps; it offered large rewards for the apprehension of street robbers. We shall see in another place how the system of rewards answered. Then the Corporation returned to their old expedient and ordained, as if it was quite a new thing, which had never occurred to any body, the lighting of the City. Already (see p. 91) there had been the Lighting Acts of 1716 and of 1736. This new ordinance was little more than a repetition of its predecessors; so that when we consider the elaborate provision made in 1736 not only for the lighting of the City, but also for the maintenance of an efficient watch, we cannot but understand that the excellent regulations passed in that year had become in this very short space of time a mere dead letter. So far, therefore, the City was no whit advanced farther than the London of the fourteenth century, which was continually admonished to clean itself, to light itself, to rid its streets of rogues, and to keep a watch at night. The streets were no cleaner; they were as badly lighted; they were as full of rogues; they were as inefficiently guarded in 1744 as in 1344.

All the riots, however, are insignificant compared with that magnificent burst which was provided for the mob of London by Lord George Gordon in 1780. The material—the first fuel for the fire—arose in Scotland, where the fanaticism of the people was in alarm lest some measures for the relief of the Catholics in Scotland should be passed. Lord George Gordon, who was one of the leaders of the Scotch fanatics, was, unfortunately, a member of Parliament. He was a strange, eccentric young man, at that time twenty-nine years of age; of wild appearance, ungoverned in his speech, extravagant in his imagination. He spoke in the House with the utmost vehemence against the cruelty and intolerance of Popery, and about the danger to Protestants were any toleration shown to Papists; he informed the House that every man in Scotland was ripe for insurrection and would die rather than submit; he declared that he would come down to the House at the head of 180,000 men, with petitions reaching from the Speaker's chair to the central window of Whitehall; he declared that the people of Scotland believed the King himself to be a Papist; in a word, he stood up most manfully, as he believed, against the Pope and the devil.

The Government could not pretend that they had received no warning of the dangers of a mob uncontrolled save by the military. In addition to the facts already told, in 1766 the people rose all over the country, robbing and plundering in every



direction, on account of the price of provisions. At Bath they did what they pleased in the market; at Berwick they were outrageous on account of finding wheat stored for exportation; and in one place they sold the corn at 5s. a bushel; at another the cheese at 3d. a pound, and the bacon at 4d. a pound; at another they destroyed a corn mill; at Leicester they seized loaded waggons starting for London; at Oxford they took the flour out of the mills and divided it; at Exeter they sold cheese under cost price; the miners in Cornwall rose and compelled the farmers and butchers to lower their prices; and so on actually over the whole country. It was a kind of *Jacquerie*. The farmers, however, were for the moment intimidated, and promised anything. It is to be remarked, that except in large towns like Birmingham the people did what they pleased so long as there were no soldiers within call. But nothing was learned from this great lesson; and the Gordon Riots later only repeated on a great scale what these village insurgents had done with impunity.

The House believed that the man could only talk; they suffered him to say what he pleased and heeded him not. But he could do more than talk: he had the power of organising; he understood how to make men act together; he had the orator's art of moving men's hearts and compelling them to follow wherever he chose to lead; he had, in a word, the gift of earnestness, which always moves; he formed "Christian" and Protestant Corresponding Societies; he circulated tracts; he advertised in the newspapers for signatures. So far as I can discover, Lord George Gordon was the father of all those who use the advertisement columns of the papers for propagandist purposes. He appealed to the Englishman's love of liberty—what liberty would the Pope leave him? to the fires of Smithfield—every man who heard him might already feel in imagination the cruel agony of the flames; to his courage—would any Englishman be so craven as not to strike a blow for his religion? Finally, he told the people that he would not present the petition, which had been signed by an enormous number, unless he was attended by at least 20,000 men. He then arranged the place of meeting and the routes which the petitioners should follow. St. George's Fields was the place, and the multitude was to be divided into four companies, of which one was to be composed entirely of Scots; they were to march upon Westminster by four different routes. Observe that he desired to produce as deep and wide an impression of strength as possible: not one line of march, but four, should illustrate the majesty of a great multitude all bent upon obtaining one end. Not Westminster only, but the City itself, the great rich City, holding itself aloof from his Associations, should witness what was meant by his great petition.

The zealous Protestants assembled, accordingly, in St. George's Fields in numbers estimated at from 60,000 to 100,000 on the 2nd day of June. They met in St. George's Fields, about the spot where Bethlehem Hospital now stands. Their leader, Lord George, drove to the place appointed about noon, and delivered a



stirring speech, after which the men, preserving good order, divided themselves into four columns and took up their respective routes. The principal body marched through Southwark, over London Bridge, through Cheapside, Ludgate Hill, Fleet Street, and the Strand—a route devised, as above stated, to produce the greatest effect and strike the greatest terror into the City by the exhibition of such vast numbers. They walked six abreast; at their head marched a tall fellow carrying the petition on his head; all were decorated with blue cockades; and they bawled lustily "No Popery" as they went along. Of course the procession, like a snowball, increased as it moved through the streets, being followed by all those who joined it out of curiosity, and by every street thief and pickpocket in the town. When they arrived at Westminster they blocked the approaches and avenues of both Houses, making a lane for the peers and members to pass, but compelling them to take the blue cockade and to cry "No Popery" with them as they walked through.

One would like to know how the crowd knew these illustrious persons, and who it was that pointed them out and explained their shortcomings. When there was no more hustling of peers the mob wanted to rush into the House, but the doorkeeper shut them out. In the House of Lords there was an angry discussion, but the peers resolved on doing nothing for that day, and left the House one by one. This was the wisest thing that they could do. Time was all on the side of order and the Guards, should it be necessary to call them out. In the Commons the scene was much more excited and violent. Outside was heard a deafening roar which never ceased for a moment. "No Popery! No Popery! Lord George! Lord George!" When their leader had been some time in the House they tried to break down the doors and threatened to rush in after him. It is said that some of the members threatened to kill Lord George on the spot if his followers dared to violate the sanctity of the House; and that one of them, his cousin, General Murray, actually followed him sword in hand ready to kill him on the first appearance of the mob. In the temper of the House nothing is more likely to have happened, certainly no stranger scene was ever presented by the House of Commons. Other members posted themselves at the doors sword in hand to defend the House. Then Lord George asked leave to bring up the petition, and for the immediate consideration of it. Leave was granted to bring up the petition, but the House very properly refused to consider the petition immediately. During the debate Lord George actually went out to the lobby, which was held by the mob, and told them who was at that moment speaking against the immediate consideration of the petition, of whom the chief was Burke, the member for Bristol. Never before or since has the House of Commons conducted a debate under such conditions; it is gratifying to remember that the members, chiefly country gentlemen, had no thought of giving way to mob violence, even at a moment when it seemed most likely that the House would be carried by the mob and themselves murdered.

Then the mob broke off into companies, some of which kept together; the respectable men among them, however, went home, no doubt thinking they had done a very noble thing indeed with their demonstration. The more zealous brethren, with their allies, the *ribauderie* of London, before going to bed that night broke into and sacked the chapel of the Bavarian Ambassador, Warwick Street, Golden Square, and the chapel in Sardinia Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields. This was on Friday. On Saturday not much more was done, the most ardent Protestants needing a rest. A few of them, however, found some mischief still to do, in robbing and ill-treating a few Catholics about Moorfields. On Sunday other Catholic chapels were robbed



THE GORDON RIOTS

and wrecked, with some houses inhabited by Catholics in the neighbourhood of Moorfields. Soldiers were sent, but with express orders not to fire upon the people. Why? Surely the time was come to put down robbery and pillage. However, when it became quite certain that the soldiers would not fire, the mob treated them with the greatest contempt, pulling their noses and spitting in their faces. It speaks well for the discipline of the army that these men stood still under this provocation.

On Monday morning the rioters attacked and wrecked Sir George Savile's house in Leicester Fields; they then adjourned to Welbeck Street and made a bonfire, before Lord George Gordon's house, of the crosses, pictures, ornaments, and vestments taken from the Catholic chapels—a wave-offering acceptable in his eyes.

Another party went to the East End, where they found and destroyed other Catholic chapels. And as a few of the rioters had been taken to Newgate and convicted by the evidence of two tradesmen of Clare Market and Little Queen Street, it was of course natural that the houses of these two enemies of religion should be attacked and their property robbed and destroyed. Meantime a reward of £500 was offered for the discovery of those concerned in the wrecking of the Catholic chapels.

On Tuesday morning troops were ordered on duty at the Tower, both Houses of Parliament, St. James's, St. George's Fields, and in other places. But as yet the authorities had not risen to an understanding of what a London mob might effect. On Tuesday evening, the weather, which was dry and hot, favouring the rioters, it became apparent that the town was entirely in the hands of the mob. The House of Commons met, Lord George among them, wearing his blue cockade, which they made him take off. Then followed the most terrible night in the whole history of London. Where were the magistracy? Where was the Lord Mayor? Where were the soldiers? The mob was actually left entirely alone and undisturbed. Nobody seemed to move. London was paralysed.

First, about six o'clock, the mob marched upon Newgate for the release of their fellow-rioters. As they could not break into the prison, and the Governor refused to surrender his prisoners, their comrades, they broke his windows and threw firebrands and combustibles into his dwelling-house, so that it presently caught fire. The fire spread from the house to the chapel, and was seizing on the wards, when the gates were either broken down or thrown open, and the rioters rushed in. There were in the gaol more than three hundred prisoners, among them four under sentence of death, and their execution appointed for Thursday; all were released. As for the fire, no attempt was made to extinguish it, and in a short time the prison was a ruined shell surrounding the ashes. Covered all over with glory, their spirits raised, their courage irresistible, the gallant rioters then broke open the new prison of Clerkenwell and set the prisoners free. They next proceeded to sack the house of Sir John Fielding, the blind magistrate; and they completed a glorious and most successful evening by the destruction of Lord Mansfield's house in Bloomsbury Square, together with his splendid library and collection of MSS. and papers. Again, where were the soldiers? Where were the constables? Where were the citizens? Was the valour of the mug-house forgotten? Were the 'prentices unmindful of their old traditions?

The mob had their own way all Tuesday night. It is incredible, but it is true, that they were allowed their own way all Wednesday and all Wednesday night. In the morning of Wednesday notices were sent by the mob to the different prisons and to a distillery in Holborn belonging to a Mr. Langdale, a Catholic, that the mob proposed to wreck them in the course of the day. But no one moved. That morning all the shops were shut; bits of blue flags were hung out, and "No Popery" was chalked on the shutters. In Whitechapel it is reported that certain foreign Jews



wrote up on their shutters, "This house is a Protestant"; while an Italian entered so warmly into the spirit and real meaning of the movement as to chalk on his closed door "No Religion"!

When the long June day drew to its close the sky was red with flames. From the King's Bench, the Fleet, the new Bridewell, the Borough Clink, the toll gates on Blackfriars' Bridge (where several men were killed), from houses in every part of the town conflagrations were rising at the same time. Six-and-thirty were counted. All the prisons in the City were now destroyed except one, the Poultry Compter.

In the evening the most remarkable achievement of the mob was the destruction of Mr. Langdale's distillery, at Holborn Bridge. He was a Catholic, therefore he deserved his fate; he was a distiller, therefore he invited it. After wrecking the place the rioters naturally fell to drinking the raw spirits, which were set running into the street—the people throwing themselves down and lapping the fiery stuff from the gutters. Many drank themselves to death on the spot; others, when the distillery took fire, perished in the flames, being too drunk to move. The roaring of the flames, the roaring of the mob, the trampling and shouting, the threats and imprecations of the people, made a night of terror such as had never before been experienced. At last the troops arrived—Heavens! At last!—this time with orders to fire. There were the Guards, or regular troops; the Militia and the City Foot Association. Then from all quarters came the platoon firing of the soldiery. The citizens, not daring to leave their beds, listened with trembling satisfaction to the rattle of the muskets, and amidst the roaring of the flames they thought they could hear the shrieks of the wounded.

On Thursday morning the City presented the appearance of a place captured and looted by the enemy; but the riot was over. The citizens did not venture to open their shops, but they looked into the street; the rioters were gone, save the dead who lay here and there, and the wounded who groaned for help. Of the former 210 were picked up, of the latter 248, but an immense number had been slightly wounded; no one knew how many of the dead had been carried away, and no one knew how many of the rioters had been burned in the flames, being too drunk to escape. During the day the soldiers patrolled the streets and arrested a great number; among others, some who were actually endeavouring to set fire to the small part of Newgate that had escaped. But the riot was over: the streets lay silent and deserted, strewn with the wreckage; the iron railings, the casks and bottles, the torn finery, the blue cockades, the furniture of the Catholic chapels, were still smouldering on the half-burning bonfires. The troops marched and rode up and down; the shops were closed, and the firemen brought their hose to put out the fires.

They clapped Lord George Gordon into the Tower and kept him there for



six months before they tried him. As is well known, he was acquitted, but afterwards showed abundant proofs of religious insanity. As for the Protestants, who followed him at first no doubt in good faith, nothing was done to them; no search was made after them; the rioters, however, who were caught red-handed, were tried and convicted. Fifty-nine were sentenced to death; twenty were actually executed; the rest were transported for life. The number actually tried amounted to eighty-five at the Old Bailey, and fifty at the Commission at St. Margaret's Hill. Seven were convicted of simple felony; sixty-nine were acquitted. The juries, in fact, do not appear to have been vindictive. Among the prisoners was Edward Dennis, the hangman; John Morris, a boy of fifteen; Letitia Holland, a



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handsome young woman of eighteen; John Burgess, a boy of thirteen. The trial of one Mascal, a respectable apothecary, was reported in full in the *Annual Register* for 1780, where it may be read.

When the riots were over, other consequences began. The Common Council asked whether it would not be best to quiet the minds of the people by repealing the Savile Act. This proposal showed that the Common Council, at the moment, were beside themselves with fear. It would have been much more to the purpose had they taken measures for the suppression of any more riotous proceedings. The House of Commons refused to consider the repeal of the Act.

Why was there no attempt to quell the riot made by the Lord Mayor at the outset? There is no answer possible to this question. On Saturday, the 3rd of June, Lord Stormont wrote from St. James's calling the Lord Mayor's attention to the danger of tumults, and expressing the confidence of the Government in

his activity and resolution to preserve the peace. What steps did the Lord Mayor take? We do not know. On Sunday, 4th June, Lord Stormont again warned the Lord Mayor. On Monday, Lord Stormont and Lord Hillsborough wrote together, calling his attention to disorders actually at that moment going on. What steps did the Lord Mayor take? We do not know.

On the 7th of June, which was Wednesday, the King, without reproaching the Lord Mayor, took the matter into his own hands, and ordered all quiet people to remain at home while his troops acted with results that we have seen.

The conclusion of the riots was followed by a correspondence and a discussion as to the power of the citizens to form themselves into armed associations for the maintenance of order. Lord Amherst, Adjutant-General, pointed out that no person can bear arms unless under the orders of a commissioned officer, and that associations might be formed for the purpose of order, but without the use of arms. He therefore ordered Colonel Twisleton, the officer in command of the troops sent to the City, to allow no arms except to the City Militia. In fact, there was grave jealousy of the City; the attitude of the Court of Common Council towards the King in the matter of the American War had no doubt had its effect, and there was still a lively memory of the London citizens in the time of Charles I.

On the 15th of June a letter was addressed to Lord Amherst from the ward's mote of Bridge Ward Within, asking permission to form a company of fifty of the more opulent citizens of the ward, to be armed, exercised, and drilled at their own expense. To this letter Lord Amherst again replied that it was not thought expedient that any persons should bear arms except for the defence of their houses or for use under command of a commissioned officer. The Lord Mayor accordingly asked an explanation of this letter, and received one explaining nothing.

The Lord Mayor replied at length, calling attention to 1 Will. & Mary, Stat. II. Chap. II., which granted the right "of all His Majesty's Protestant subjects to have arms for their defence suitable to their condition and as allowed by law."

Lord Amherst, in return, laid it down that they might bear arms, but must not assemble in arms without the authority of His Majesty. In the House of Commons, on the 17th, it was stated that the reason why the troops did so little to stop outrage was that the demand for their interference was so common that they could not accede in many cases to the invitations.

The correspondence condensed above was made the subject of discussion in both Houses. The Duke of Richmond observed that these letters were deposited in the public archives, and that they would descend to posterity as a most alarming precedent of a most violent and unwarrantable infringement of the constitution if no resolution of censure was entered on the records of Parliament. However,

nothing was done. At the moment popular fury seemed the greatest evil facing the nation.

The following is a private letter, written on the 18th of September 1780, from a gentleman in London to one in Yorkshire, giving his personal recollection of the riots (*Place Collection*):—

"None of my acquaintance have received any personal harm in the late riots, but several have had their effects burnt. When fires are lighted up they make no distinction regarding religion. The whole appears now like a dream to me, and I had a capital share in settling the business, being a member of the Military Foot Association. So long as the mischief was confined merely to a few empty chapels, people did not mind it; but when Newgate was forced open and fired, the question was no longer a question merely of religion. It was the evening after that, when the military were let loose, and when the London Association were under arms, amongst the rest your humble servant, who pulled the trigger twice with ball the first night, and continued four nights more upon his legs in the streets, without intermission, besides many other nights at intervals during a month afterwards. I did not then, nor have not since, acquainted any of my relations thereof, because it might make them uneasy in case of any future commotion. The first night's service exhibited an awful but beautiful scene. Figure to yourself every man, woman, and child in the streets, panic-struck, the atmosphere as red as blood with the ascending fire, muskets firing in every part, and consequently men, women, and children lying sprawling in the streets; all the lower order of people stark mad with liquor, huzzaing and parading with flags. Our corps assembled at a tavern near Guildhall about eight in the evening; from thence we proceeded in files through the multitude (who hissed us all the way) to the Mansion House, which is in the heart of the City, and within about fifty yards distance from the Bank of England and the Royal Exchange. The King's Guards took possession of all the streets, facing every way, and suffering nobody to remain within except our corps, which covered them, and the civil and military officers. We had not been in this position above ten minutes before mobs approached us down Cheapside, and were fired upon. Soon after another mob came towards the Bank and were also fired upon. Within the lines all was perfectly still and silent, but on all sides without the air was rent with huzzas. The mob, consisting of thieves of every species, had some pistols, which were fired, but felt no inclination to stay when they felt the musket ball amongst them. Of course the business was soon settled near the Bank of England, but the populace fell upon lesser game. Private houses in different parts of the neighbourhood were begun to be ransacked, and the inhabitants came to the Mansion House begging protection. The King's troops could not move from their positions near the Bank; therefore it fell to the lot of part of our corps to march at about eleven o'clock. We went to Broad Street, where was a large mob ransacking a house, and burning the furniture in the street. They would not disperse, and bid us fire and be d—d. Of course there was soon exhibited a scene of killed, wounded, and dying. I belong to the company which then went in front. Those who could run, after a few were hurt, did run, except four that we secured in the house. We were very merciful to them, by firing only one gun at once, instead of a volley, thereby giving time to many to get off. This business being settled, and the fire put out, we proceeded and did the same at another fire, round which a mob was gathered, who ran away at first sight of us, knowing that we were in earnest. We were very busy all night after at different places. From that night all rioting ceased in the City. The following nights the King's troops rested under arms in the Bank and the Exchange, and the Association took their former post; but we had little to do except to patrol the different streets, and enter houses in the dead of the night for the purpose of apprehending objects of public justice. We were lastly called upon to attend the public executions in different parts, with which service our campaign has closed. It has been very inconvenient to many of us, but for my own part, I confess that nothing I ever did has pleased me more, because our conduct has met with the highest applause from all parties and all ranks of men here, blackguards excepted. The public



papers have often mistaken us for the Guards, therefore you may possibly not have heard of any such corps as the London Association. Our uniform is very handsome, much like the dress of officers in some of the King's regiments. Our numbers are now near 500, but not all disciplined."

On the 18th of January 1793, Lord George Gordon, the term of his imprisonment having expired, was brought into the Court of King's Bench for the purpose of being admitted to bail; he was accompanied by the keeper, two men as his bail, and several Jews. He had a large slouched hat on his head, and wore an enormous beard. He was ordered to take off his hat, which he refused. The Court directed the crier to take it off, which he did accordingly. Lord George desired the Court to take notice that his hat had been taken off by violence. He then deliberately took out of his pocket a white cap, which he put upon his head, and tied a handkerchief over it; after which he produced a paper, entitled "The Petition of Israel Abraham George Gordon, commonly called Lord George Gordon." He said the petition was an apology for appearing with his head covered, agreeably to the custom of the Jews. By a conformity to this custom he meant no disrespect to the Court, as it arose purely from the tenderness of his conscience, since he had entered into the "holy covenant of circumcision." The petition was read by the officer of the Court, and contained many arguments, drawn from the Jewish writers, in favour of appearing with his head covered before all men. The sentence against him for the libels was, at his request, read, after which he read a written paper, the substance of which was, that he had been imprisoned for five years among murderers, thieves, etc., and that all the consolation he had arose from his trust in God; that he was compelled to find security for his good behaviour for fourteen years, himself in £5000 and two sureties in £2500 each. In order to obtain his enlargement he had brought two persons into court, who were ready to become his bail; but the Attorney-General objecting to the bail proposed, and producing affidavits of their incompetency, Lord George was remanded to prison, where shortly afterwards he died.



## CHAPTER II

### POLICE AND JUSTICE

IN this chapter I have to consider the conditions of London in the eighteenth century from the criminal and the police point of view. The view presented to us by the contemporary records, by the statements of those who wrote on the subject, and by reports of trials, is darker than that of any previous period. There is a very dark side to London always and in every age; there has always existed in the great city a large criminal class; there has always been among us—not of us—a race apart of vagabonds, rogues, beggars, and professional thieves. In the eighteenth century this class grew to proportions which terrified those who understood, while it put forth long arms and raked into its company thousands who had hitherto, from father to son, been steady and well-conducted craftsmen of the City. I shall show the conditions of the time, first from the point of view put forward by the presentments of the Grand Jury of Middlesex; next, by essays on the subject written in 1731, 1750, and 1796; thirdly, by the condition of the police and the working of the rewards system; fourthly, by actual cases of crime and violence.

I shall then consider a trial at the Old Bailey; the condition of the criminal prisons; the method of conducting executions at Tyburn; the punishments of imprisonment, the hulks, pillory, the stocks, whipping, etc. This inquiry will further include an account of the debtors' prisons.

A "Presentment" by the Grand Jury of Middlesex for the maintenance of religion and order and the discouragement of vice seems to have been expected from time to time, like the sovereign's proclamation against vice which surprises the world at irregular intervals. Three notable Grand Jury presentments have been preserved—that is, have been published where they are accessible; I suppose they are all preserved somewhere. The three are those of 1728, 1741, and 1744. In the first the Grand Jury, among other things, call attention—

- (1) To the drinking of gin (Maitland, p. 544).
- (2) To the increase of beggars.
- (3) To the immoralities of the masquerades.

Perhaps in consequence of this presentment it was made illegal to sell spirits in less quantities than two gallons without a licence. The presentment of 1741 protested against the interference of soldiers in an election, and complained again of the increase of beggary. The latter evil was met by a charter granting permission to create additional Justices of the Peace.

The third presentment, that of 1744, is a most remarkable document. It is directed against luxury, extravagance, and ill-fame. And it names, openly, persons as well as places:—

"We, the Grand Jury, sworn to enquire for our Sovereign Lord the King, and the body of this county, have observed, from most of the presentments of returns delivered to us by the constables of this county, that they have been, as we apprehend and fear, very remiss in their duty, by returning their several districts and divisions to be quiet and in good order, or to that effect.

Whereas the contrary does most manifestly appear, in many instances, as well from the accounts or advertisements we read in the daily papers, printed and dispersed within this county, inviting and seducing not only the inhabitants, but all other persons, to several places kept apart for the encouragement of luxury, extravagance, and idleness, and, we fear, other wicked illegal purposes.

And we do accordingly hereby present, as places riotous, of great extravagance, luxury, idleness, and ill-fame, the several houses, places, and persons following, within this county, to wit—

(1) The Lady Mornington, and her gaming-house, in or near Covent Garden, within this county.

(2) The Lady Castle, and her gaming-house, in or near Covent Garden, within this county.

(3) The proprietors of the avenues leading to and from the several playhouses in Covent Garden and Drury Lane, in this county, for not preventing wicked, loose, and disorderly persons from loitering in the front of their several houses on play-nights; by which neglect and the riotous behaviour of such disorderly persons, many of his Majesty's good subjects are often in danger of losing their lives or receiving some other bodily harm, and are frequently robbed of their watches and money, to the great discredit of civil government.

(4) The proprietors of the house and divisions called Sadler's Wells, adjoining to the New River Head, in or near Islington, late one Forcer's, now pretended to be opened and carried on by John Warren, within this county, where there is frequently a resort of great numbers of loose, disorderly, idle people.

(5) The proprietors of a place called New Wells, in Goodman's Fields, at the bottom of Lemon Street, within this county, where are daily meetings of disorderly, idle people.

(6) The proprietors of a place called the New Wells, near London Spaw, Clerkenwell, within this county, where great numbers of disorderly people meet. And

(7) The proprietors of a place called Hallam's New Theatre, at Mayfair, within this county, where there are usually great meetings of evil and disorderly, idle persons."

In the year 1731 there arose the first of many "Bitter Cries" as to the violence and the robberies carried on in the City of London, "Violence and plunder," says the author of the pamphlet on the subject, "are no longer confined to the highways, where the robbers have lurking-places to hide, and numberless turnings to avoid and escape the pursuit of the country."

"The scene is quite chang'd, the field of action is remov'd; and the actors themselves are likewise changed. The scene, I say, is changed; the streets of the City are now the places of danger; men are knocked down and robb'd, nay, sometimes murdered at their own doors, and in passing and repassing from house to house, or from shop to shop.

Stage coaches are robbed in High Holbourn, Whitechapel, Pall Mall, Soho, and at almost all the avenues to the City. Hackney coaches and gentlemen's coaches are stopt in Cheapside, St. Paul's Churchyard, the Strand, and other the most crowded streets, and that even while the people in throngs are passing and repassing, as it were at their elbows.

Nor are these personal violences the only grievances which we have to complain of; but the boldness and multitude of lewd and disorderly persons of both sexes, which throng the streets as soon as the evening may be said to begin, are such, that renders it not only unpleasant, but indeed unsafe, to honest and modest people to be abroad, or go from place to place, however lawful or however urgent their occasions may be."

He goes on to point out that in a city so full of narrow and winding ways and dark alleys thieves may lurk in safety, while it is impossible in a place of so much business to avoid going about with large sums of money, bills, and other things of value. If the streets are unsafe, he says that the houses are equally exposed to housebreakers of the greatest daring.

A new method of robbing people is by threatening letters. Money must be deposited in a particular place. If not, the house will be set on fire, or the man and his family will be murdered. In addition to these evils, there are the watchmen and constables who are too often in league with the robbers and are bribed by them. It is remarkable in this *expose* that the writer, neither at this point nor afterwards, suggests that the citizens should simply show fight. In fact, the spirit of fight had gone out of the City; or, to speak more truthfully, the better class had ceased to fight. They had become a peaceful folk, desiring nothing but quiet and order, which they could not enforce, and utterly unable to stand up against the open robberies that disgraced their streets. The 'prentices, even, had left off fighting. The old civic love of battle lingered on, it is true, but with the mob, the lowest and most dangerous class, who supplied the robbers of the street and highway, the housebreakers, and the writers of the blackmail letters.

The author of the pamphlet traces the history of these crimes back to the reign of Charles the Second. But there were rogues before that monarch's time. Here we need not follow him. He tells us that on the accession of William and Mary, and especially through the resolute action of the latter, a general reformation of morals was effected; a watch set upon the roads; the Lord's Day was kept holy; on that day no coaches plied in the streets, no boats upon the river; the fields were deserted on Sunday and the churches were full; associations were formed by the citizens for the assistance of the constables. But these associations became rapidly lukewarm in their zeal; and, indeed, a new aid to virtue, which rendered their aid useless, appeared when the war broke out. This carried off the rogues and the rascals of London by the thousand, cleared the streets of the bullies, and sent off hundreds of the women to follow the camp. For a brief space London enjoyed a respite



from rogues. But they came back, the rogues and the women, their companions and confederates, and all who had not fallen on the field of vice: the Queen was dead; the associations had melted away; and the streets were abandoned once more to a watch which grew yearly more ineffective, so that the state of the City became worse than ever.

We then arrive at the remedy. It is, says our author, very wisely, to break up the nests and retreats of the rogues; to persecute them, to leave them no place of refuge. Their homes were the houses which we now call disorderly—they used to have a coarser and a plainer name—and certain dens of wickedness, licensed as taverns, which were then called night-houses. The disorderly house speaks for itself; it is always in every age the chosen haunt of every kind of devilry, the place where men are robbed, or incited to rob; are stripped of their own or encouraged to strip others; the home of lust, illusion, pretence, robbery, and murder. The night-house, although its name suggests crime, was at the beginning simply intended as a house of call for those whose trade obliged them to work late into the night or to begin work early in the morning. For instance, the houses about Covent Garden, where the men who have to be at their place in the market with fruit and vegetables at two in the morning can obtain coffee and other refreshments, are night-houses in the old sense of the word. But the night-house became corrupted; it ceased to be the house of late men working in the night; it was converted into a refuge and receptacle for loose women and their bullies, and for the young men whom the women enticed into going with them to their destruction. Every night there were robberies in these dens; the robbers ran out by the back door while the constables were called and while they were breaking open the front; they were all in league together; the night-house became simply a school for the education, and a residence and business resort, of all who plundered the rich and lived upon the wickedness of the vicious. They also maintained a correspondence with each other, so that when one place grew too hot for a man he could find shelter in another.

Our writer proceeds to consider the various remedies proposed. For instance, that no women shall be suffered to walk in the street alone after dark. This is manifestly impossible. Why should respectable women pay so heavy a penalty for the incompetence of the police? That the watch shall be multiplied. But in a city so full of winding courts and lanes, how can a watch, however numerous, protect the people? That the watch be armed with firearms. But there has always been a rooted objection to a garrison in the City. He does not mention, as was said above, the most obvious and natural remedy, that the citizens should fight for their own protection. The best guard against a street robber is a stout cudgel, such as Dr. Johnson, some years later, adopted with the best results.

The remedy which this writer proposed was the simple one of revoking licences



and only allowing them to persons of good character. And that this restriction must be universal; not begun, that is, at Westminster, so that the rogues, driven out of one place, find refuge in another, but that all the Justices alike, in London, Westminster, Middlesex, and Surrey, should unite in the determination to license victuallers only on condition of good conduct.

A so-called "Prisoner in Newgate," in the year 1718, wrote a pamphlet on thieves and thief-takers, which, though a clumsy performance, conveys some information as to the practices of the time. He throws his information into the form of a dialogue. A countryman is introduced to a thieves' house of resort. He asks who the people are, and is informed by the landlord, with a strange and unnatural candour. Yonder are three housebreakers lately let out from Newgate, the case not being proved against them; the turnkeys have fleeced them out of all their money, and they are now laying their heads together to devise a way to make more. There are two wenches beginning their trade as street-walkers and thieves. There is a young sailor who will probably join the housebreakers. There are a lot of boys drinking and gambling; they are pickpockets. There is a fellow who has just robbed a shop of its account books and has told the thief-taker about it; that worthy will make the shopkeeper redeem them and will then keep most of the money himself. There is an old gentleman who can no longer rob, but who can find out what is going on and where there will be a throng of people; he has just ascertained, for instance, that an Archbishop is to preach a charity sermon on Sunday next, which will bring together a great many people. Those are "Battalions of Street Files," *i.e.* companies of pickpockets. You see that they are supping in great splendour. One of the ladies has had four husbands, the first three of whom were hanged, while the fourth has had the honour to be condemned four times.

News is brought that the King is going to open Parliament that very day; half of them jump up and run away to join in the crowd and pick pockets. There is a great noise outside; a man rushes in dripping wet, while the mob in the street roars and bawls after him; it is a thief caught in the act; they have ducked him seven or eight times, first in a horse-pond, and then in the Thames to wash him. There are five women crying together because their husbands are all to be hanged to-morrow; we need not pity them, because they will console themselves with a new husband the day after. Those three stout fellows with pistols are footpads; a constable, followed by five men, enters the room and arrests the three; one of them fires a pistol and kills one of the posse; they are then secured and marched off.

At the sight of the constable and his posse the rest of the company vanish with great rapidity until there is no one left except the prisoners and the constable and his men. Then the landlord humbly invites the constable to

take a bottle with him, and hopes the name of his house would not be mentioned, for indeed it would greatly injure his reputation if it were known that such people had been taken in his house—a place of such good repute.

The well-known history of Jonathan Wild has become the typical case of a thief-taker in confederation and conspiracy with thieves whom he encouraged,



JONATHAN WILD'S HOUSE

From an engraving by Lacy for *The European Magazine*, 1723

buying and receiving their stolen goods until he thought it was to his interest to lay information against them and to get them hanged. At the same time he had an office where he openly received people who had been robbed, and for a large consideration undertook to get them their money or their goods back again. He was, in fact, a villain of the blackest complexion possible. Unfortunately, however, he was only one of many villains as bad as himself, but

not so clever. As for his private life, he had deserted his wife and taken up with a woman who knew all the villainies and most of the villains of the town. In this way she was of the greatest assistance to him. There were, however, other women who became his mistresses. When his proceedings became too notorious to be allowed any longer, it was found necessary, in order to stop him, if not to put him into Newgate, to pass a special Act of Parliament (4 George I.)—an Act which wholly failed. The following clause was levelled directly against Jonathan Wild and practitioners in the same line:—

“And whereas there are divers persons, who have secret acquaintance with felons, and who make it their business to help persons to their stolen goods, and by that means gain money from them, which is divided between them and the felons, whereby they greatly encourage such offenders. Be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, that wherever any person taketh money or reward, directly or indirectly, under pretence, or upon account of helping any person or persons to any stolen goods or chattels, every such person so taking money or reward as aforesaid (unless such person do apprehend, or cause to be apprehended, such felon, who stole the same, and give evidence against him) shall be guilty of felony, according to the nature of the felony committed in stealing such goods, and in such and the same manner as if such offender had stolen such goods and chattels in the manner and with such circumstances as the same were stolen.”

Seven years after the passing of this Act, viz. on the 15th of February 1725, he was brought before the magistrate, charged with assisting a certain Johnson, a highwayman, to make his escape. He was committed to Newgate, and at the Sessions of the 24th he entered his prayer either to be tried that session, or bailed, or discharged. But there came into court a warrant of detainer, with several informations on oath, the most important of which are the following:—

“(1) That, for many years past, Jonathan Wild has been a confederate with great numbers of highwaymen, pickpockets, housebreakers, shoplifters, and other thieves.

(2) That he has formed a kind of corporation of thieves, of which he is the head or director, and, that notwithstanding his pretended services, in detecting and prosecuting offenders, he procured such only to be hanged as concealed their booty, or refused to share it with him.

(3) That he has divided the town and country into so many districts and appointed distinct gangs for each, who regularly account to him for their robberies.

(4) That the persons employed by him are, for the most part, felons convict, who are returned from transportation before the time for which they were transported has expired; and that he makes choice of them to be his agents, because they cannot be legal evidence against him.

(5) That he has not only been a receiver of stolen goods, as well as of writings of all kinds, for near fifteen years past, but has frequently been a confederate and robbed along with the above-mentioned convicted felons.

(6) That in order to carry on these vile practices, and to gain some credit with the ignorant multitude, he usually carried a short silver staff, as a badge of authority from the Government, which he uses to produce when he himself has been concerned in robbing, in order to show that he has been endeavouring to arrest the robbers.

(7) That he has, under his care and direction, several warehouses for receiving and concealing stolen goods; and also a ship for carrying off jewels, watches, and other valuable goods to Holland, where he has a superannuated thief acting as his factor.



(8) And lastly, it appears, that he has often sold human blood, by procuring false evidence, to swear persons into acts they were not guilty of; sometimes to prevent them from being evidences against himself, and at other times for the sake of the great rewards offered by the Government."

In the year 1718, one Hitchin published a pamphlet entitled *The Regulator, or a Discovery of the Thieves, Thief-takers, and Locks, in and about the City of London, with the Thief-takers' Proclamation: also an Account of all the Flash Words now in vogue among the Thieves*. In this pamphlet the writer, Marshal, endeavours to revenge himself on Jonathan by exposing him. He gives an account of several of his tricks and transactions, describes the various gangs of thieves under his command or influence, and relates the greatest atrocities, in which he openly names Jonathan as the prime mover. He then gives an account of the flash houses, names them, and the persons who keep them. This is followed by "A List of Thieves now at liberty who are Jonathan Wild's Weekly Pensioners, 1718." These are not only named, but stories are told of what they do, and of what Jonathan and they do together. From this account it appears that the peace officers, the turnkeys of the prisons, Jonathan Wild, and even the justices, were all connected together. The language is exceedingly gross, and the charges are such as could now be made with impunity against no man.

After two months of prison, Jonathan was finally indicted for receiving money of one Catherine Stetham, on pretence of recovering a packet of stolen lace which he never intended or attempted to recover; nor did he apprehend or cause to be apprehended the felon who stole the lace. This little business was actually transacted in Newgate itself. He was tried on this single indictment, probably because it was the one most easily proved. His trial took place on the 26th of April 1725. He was found guilty and sentenced to death. His behaviour in prison after his sentence may be read in the pages of Fielding. If that history is not true, it ought to be. On the night before his execution he endeavoured to poison himself with laudanum but did not quite succeed; he was placed in the cart half insensible and carried off to Tyburn tree, where he was hanged, amid the tumultuous applause of the whole *ribauderie* of London.

"It is not easy," says the narrator in the *Place Collection*, "to express with what roughness the mob treated him. Instead of those signs of pity which they generally show, when common criminals are going to execution, they reviled and cursed him, pelting him with dirt and stones continually. The other malefactors being ready to be turned off and the executioner telling him he might take any reasonable time to prepare himself, he continued sitting in the cart for a little while, but the mob grew so outrageous at the indulgence, that they called out incessantly to the hangman to do his duty, and threatened to knock him on the head if he did not immediately perform it. Finding delay dangerous, he no longer deferred to give the populace the satisfaction they desired."

Wild was buried in old St. Pancras Churchyard, but next morning his empty coffin was found lying in the road outside the churchyard, so that it was naturally



supposed that the dissecting-room got him. Perhaps his skeleton still adorns the collections of the College of Surgeons.

He had one son by the wife whom he deserted—four other women were treated in the same manner; the last mistress alone deplored her loss. His boy, who was nineteen at the time of his father's execution, was of so turbulent a disposition that it was thought proper to confine him on the day of the execution for fear he should do a mischief to some one in the mob. He afterwards sold himself as a servant to the plantations. This means one of two things: either he went abroad to get out of the way, or he fell into the hands of crimps who made him drunk and so persuaded him to go out to America. Perhaps, somewhere in Virginia, there are still living descendants of Jonathan Wild; the historian, however, must admit that the young man was more likely to follow his father's steps and be hanged.

We owe to Henry Fielding an account, clear and plain, of the condition of London as regards robbery in the year 1750. His work, called *An Enquiry into the causes of the late Increase of Robbers, etc., with some Proposals for Remedying the growing Evil*, appeared in 1751 and speedily went into a second edition. He begins with assuming, as a fact known to everybody, that the streets and roads were infested with robbers of every kind, and that the town was threatened with the formation of gangs and companies like the Italian banditti, and companies such as that maintained so long by the famous Cartouche.

What, first of all, he asks, are the causes of this increase of crime? Two causes might be assigned; but Fielding could not rise above the ideas of his time. He could not, for instance, perceive that the cowardice of the citizens, who had not only left off carrying arms but no longer possessed the old fighting instinct, who were even afraid of giving evidence, and were terrorised into silence, was the first and greatest cause of all the riots, robberies, and mobs of the last century. The second cause was the absence of a vigilant and efficient police.

However, Fielding assigns as the most important cause, a great increase in luxury among the lower kind of people. But in every age the moralist inveighs against the luxury of the times. If Fielding could have seen the comforts which are now within the reach of the working classes; if he could have foreseen a time of clean linen, broadcloth, baths, warm petticoats, good boots, daily flesh meat, fruit in plenty, for the working classes, he might have asked himself whether the raising of the standard is such a very bad thing for the people. In his enumeration of luxuries he points to the increased love of distractions; to the masquerade, the ridotto, and the opera, whither even the tradesmen resort, when they can afford it, and to the innumerable gardens, wells, houses, and taverns where all kinds of people are found, even the very lowest; where the craftsman

spends his time and his money, and where the shopkeeper learns the shortest way to a debtors' prison. But the Londoner has always from the very earliest times run eagerly after the tabor and the pipe.

The second cause, he says, is the drunkenness so prevalent. He points out that there are existing excellent laws for the prevention of this vice; penalties of fines and stocks for the offender, were these laws only enforced; but they are not. Why? Because there are no police, a fact which he does not understand.

"A new kind of drunkenness, unknown to our ancestors, has lately sprung up amongst us, which, if not put a stop to, will infallibly destroy a great part of the inferior people. The drunkenness I here intend is that acquired by the strongest intoxicating liquors, and particularly by that poison called Gin."

The next cause is the vice of gambling. Here, again, he enumerates the laws which, from time to time, have been passed against gambling. He does not, however, ask the very pertinent question, "What is the use of passing laws which the whole country is bent upon breaking?" The various enactments are curious. Henry VIII. would not allow any craftsman to play cards or dice except at Christmas. Who looked into the craftsmen's houses or taverns to see that the law was obeyed? The informer, it is true, would get half the fine; but what else would he get when he went back among his friends against whom he had informed? At what time in history was the English craftsman meek and forgiving to the informer? Queen Anne maternally ordered that cheating at cards should be punished by a fine of five times the sum so won. Are there any cases on record in which that fine was inflicted? Was it thought good form, when two men sat down to play, for the loser to prosecute the winner? George II., out of his fatherly heart, ordered a fine of five times the sum won or lost, fairly or unfairly. Did any one ever pay that fine? Did any player ever inform against his friends? He also forbade the games of Pharaoh, the Ace of Hearts, Bassett, Hazard, Roly Poly, and all other games of cards. Yet they flourish to this day, and have ruined their thousands and their tens of thousands and their hundreds of thousands, since this Act was passed.

Fielding then proceeds to consider the laws that relate to the provision of the poor. And he shows how laws actually intended to benefit them have been turned into weapons for their oppression. Here he anticipates the action of the Charity Organisation Society, and points out the foolishness of indiscriminate alms.

Next comes the evil of the "fence." One of the greatest encouragements to dishonesty is the care and security with which a rogue disposes of his plunder. Pawnbrokers there are in plenty who will buy up anything brought to them. Some satisfy their consciences by expressing the hope that the things are honestly come by; others engage openly with the thieves. The latter send everything they buy to Rotterdam or Amsterdam, where they sell at a vast profit what they

bought for a song. The existence of this kind of trade was revealed somewhere about the year 1750 by the examination of a Jew named Cadosa, who carried it on. Again, the persons robbed were generally ready to advertise that they would give a reward for the return of the goods "*and no questions asked*"—a custom which was of course a direct encouragement to thieves.

In this case, as in all others, Fielding points out that the existing law was sufficient to check the practice. For instance, there was the statute of George II., which provided that receivers of stolen goods were to be transported for fourteen years. The weak point in the law, however, was the extreme difficulty of convicting, because the thief was not allowed to be a witness in the case.

A chapter on the laws relating to vagabonds may be passed over.

The author next considers the encouragement to crime which was held out by the chance, notoriously one to be considered, of escaping without being apprehended, much less tried. Everybody knew that many rogues carried on their villainies with impunity, simply because they terrorised the officers and the people. It was also notorious that any attempt to arrest a robber would lead to a rescue by armed confederates. Here, again, by the law, such an arrest was in the power of every one and ought to be performed by every one. But, first, the law was never explained or taught to the people. To this day, how many persons know their own rights, their own duties, and their own responsibilities in the matter of dealing with criminals caught in the act? Next, against cowardice, the law is powerless. As to the cowardice of the ordinary citizen of the eighteenth century, the history of the continual rioting and mob violence which disgraces the annals of London proclaims the fact. The citizens left the discovery of crime to paid informers, and they thought to suppress crime by multiplying capital offences which their juries refused to carry into effect; they allowed the name of thief-catcher to become as infamous as that of informer.

There were, next, in favour of the rogue, the difficulties attending prosecution. Prosecutors, Fielding says, are often—

- "1. Fearful and readily intimidated by the threats of the Gang.
  2. Delicate, and unable to appear in a public court,
  3. Indolent, so that they will not give themselves the trouble of a prosecution.
  4. Avaricious, and therefore unwilling to undergo the expense of it; many perhaps find their account in compounding the matter.
  5. Tender-hearted, and reluctant to take away the life of a man.
- Lastly, necessitous, and cannot really afford the cost, however small, together with the loss of time which attends it."

Of course, one asks at the present day, why should there be any cost in prosecuting a criminal?

Suppose, however, that all these obstacles have been removed, there is



another very important difficulty, that of conviction. Street robberies are generally committed in the dark; an alibi is always set up by the prisoner's friends. In many robberies the victim is knocked on the head, or the robber is disguised; there are more than one concerned, and in the confusion it is impossible to make out clearly any of their faces; or, again, an accomplice, if he is admitted as witness, is seldom considered worthy of credit. Many other difficulties will occur. Once more, for the encouragement of criminals, there is the chance of obtaining a pardon; not a slender and small chance, but an extremely probable and possible event. It must be remembered that the King himself signed every warrant for an execution. Naturally, the King was inclined to err on the side of mercy, and to pardon all those whose cases presented any reasonable claim for doubt.

Lastly, supposing the felon to have been successfully arrested, committed, tried, convicted, and sentenced; what about the manner of execution? Let us quote Fielding's own words:—

"But if every hope which I have mentioned fails the thief; if he should be discovered, apprehended, prosecuted, convicted, and refused a pardon; what is his situation then? Surely most gloomy and dreadful, without any hope, and without any comfort. This is, perhaps, the case with the less practised, less spirited, and less dangerous rogues; but with those of a different constitution it is far otherwise. The day appointed by law for the thief's shame is the day of glory in his own opinion and that of his friends. His procession to Tyburn and his last moments there are all triumphant, attended with the compassion of the meek and tender-hearted, and with the applause, admiration, and envy of all the bold and hardened. His behaviour in his present condition, not the crime, how atrocious soever, which brought him to it, is the subject of universal contemplation."

When the watchmen were bribed and the constable was bribed, it is not surprising to hear that the justice also was bribed. The popular opinion as to the justice's integrity is expressed in a book called the *The Shakspear's Head*. It was published in the year 1755. It is in two small octavo volumes, and its full title is *Memoirs of the Shakspear's Head in Covent Garden, by the Ghost of Shakspear*. The book is a scandalous chronicle from beginning to end, containing sketches of extremely profligate persons, and of their adventures in the disorderly houses of Covent Garden. No doubt, at the time, the chief attraction of the book was the fact that the fictitious names threw a very thin veil over the real persons described. Thus, Nan Featherstone, Jenny Driver, and Miss Nellguard were certainly well-known persons in the "bagnios" of that quarter, while Lord Lubber, Louvre the dancing-master, and Jack the waiter are quite clearly portraits carefully drawn, libellous to the highest degree, and meant to be recognised.

There is no clue to the name of the author, unless it is a dedication to Samuel Foote, in which kindnesses to the author are acknowledged. And he declares, which is obviously a deliberate lie, that no character is intended for any particular

person. One chapter, however, is devoted to the most venomous delineation of Henry Fielding in his official capacity. That there should be no possible mistake as to the person intended, he is mentioned by name without any disguise at all. This chapter, at least, whatever may be the others, is a personal attack. And since the book, unsavoury and odious, is clearly the work of a practised hand, I have no doubt it was written by one of those creatures who always infest literature—the unsuccessful, disappointed, and envious writer. If so, here is one more instance of the malice with which a popular author is pursued. It is, however, possible that this view may be wrong. Fielding could not fail to make many enemies; he had a pen of finer temper than the keenest blade of Damascus. It was perhaps revenge, rather than jealousy and envy, which prompted this attack.

The picture of the administration of justice, quite apart from the principal figure, shows the general opinion on the subject; an opinion which may be gathered from many other sources. The court, or lock-up, described in the book, where sat the constable of the night, was situated close to Covent Garden Church; the constable was a man named Lock, a hair-dresser by trade. He had exercised this office for many years, not being elected to it, but being paid by those pensioners who were called upon to serve, to discharge their duties for them. Every householder was thus liable to serve as constable on a jury or an inquest; and as the duty of sitting up all night to receive the thieves and drunken men brought in by the watch was both disagreeable and onerous, there was in every parish some man found who undertook the duty for a fixed nightly wage. This wage he increased by the simple process of taking bribes.

"The power with which he had been long invested, invigorated the hearts of the sons and daughters of Venus and Mercury, many of whom were constantly brought in by his lanthorn'd subjects, to pay their obeisance to his Midnight Majesty, and were as duly set at liberty, through the interposition of Plutus sometimes in garb, tawny as the sunburnt Mexican, and at other times white as Lady Cribbages's hand."

Few were the offenders whom he conducted to the Bow Street magistrate; not only were they few in number, but they were only those who were too poor and miserable to offer any bribes for release. This conduct gave great dissatisfaction to the justice of the peace, who suspected that his constable was beforehand with him in levying taxes, and secreted many things which, had they escaped his manual operations, must have fallen to the share of his sagacious worship, who was perfectly of the same disposition, and was, if report spoke of him truly, a close shaver.

Before this constable were brought, after a drunken brawl, Lord Frake and Squire Sprightly. They were covered with mud and filth, their heads were cut open and bleeding; they were both drunk. The man who had administered this punishment was a carter, who was also in custody. Of course,

on discovering the quality of his prisoners, the constable called upon the carter to apologise and make submission. The fellow refused in language which shows the eloquence of the streets, and proceeded to assault the constable himself in a manner then more common than at present; indeed, even the oldest inhabitant can hardly remember seeing the thing done in these degenerate days. "Ducking suddenly down, he darted his head with such force and dexterity into the"—stomach—"of his antagonist, that he fell breathless on the floor." The carter was, however, reduced to insensibility by a blow over the head with a pole, and in that condition was rolled into the black hole. Chairs were called for his lordship and the squire, who were carried off.

"It is not amiss," says the author, "to let you into a secret which you did not know before, viz., Sprightly, fearing some ill consequences from this rencountre, had, at his first entrance into the watch-house, squeezed Lock close by the hand, as a mark of friendship, and some of the watchmen maliciously (for so it must be) reported that they soon after saw him examining a guinea by the light of the candle, as if he suspected its weight."

In the morning, at nine o'clock, Mr. Lock escorted his charge to Bow Street, there to give his prisoner over to the magistrate.

The constable then proceeds with his cases, inventing some, exaggerating others. A girl is charged with trying to rob two gentlemen; she has no money to bribe the clerk, and is committed. A young man is charged with looking like a rogue. The justice says, "Not a word, sirrah, I am sure you are a rogue by your looks." He then commits him, and calls upon the court to congratulate him on clearing the district of vagabonds. This is an allusion to his pamphlet on the increase of robberies. To show how just and worthy a magistrate he is, he then invites the constable to drink with him, intending to get a larger share of the plunder. The carter is then brought forward. The justice falls into amazement at his unparalleled wickedness. What! assault a lord—a noble lord and a squire! He is going to send off a messenger to his lordship's house to express sympathy with his lordship in this attack upon his lordship's august person, when the squire arrives and procures the man's release. It also appears that the young man who was committed without the opportunity of a word is the squire's own servant, who was arrested when performing a message for his master. So he too is released, and nobody goes to prison except the wretched girl and a few other equally poor and miserable creatures, arrested for their poverty and their misery.

We have seen what was the condition of the town in 1731 and in 1750. Let us now consider another picture of the town by another police magistrate, Mr. Patrick Colquhoun, in the year 1796. We shall find that it represents a condition of widespread criminality which seems appalling. We must remember at the outset that the lower classes of London had been for some generations left almost altogether alone. The Church had not yet assumed the supervision of the parish



in the manner which is now understood: the clergy, it is true, regularly performed the services and preached their sermons; the doors stood wide open for all the world to enter—if they pleased. I have considered the subject of the Church in another place; it is sufficient here to note that, in the quarters chiefly inhabited by the criminal classes, there was no religion, as there were no morals, no education, no knowledge, no restraining influences, rules, or principles whatever. The boys and girls grew up among the thieves and drabs—their parents, brothers, sisters, cousins. In due course, that is to say as soon as they could act independently, they became in their turn thieves and prostitutes, without a thought that this way of life was criminal; without knowing what was meant by crime; hardly knowing even the distinction of good and evil.

Of course they learned, very early in life, that shoplifting, highway robbery, burglary, cutting down a fruit-tree, hedge-lifting, picking pockets of anything worth more than a shilling, were punishable with death. They also learned, as the century drew on, and criminals increased, and the death list lengthened, that juries would not convict, if they could avoid it, of capital offences; and transportation or imprisonment, being at least accompanied with life, had few terrors for them. Besides, they saw that many of their friends actually went on year after year without detection, actually died in full notoriety as habitual criminals, shielded by each other and by the receivers.

In addition to the hereditary criminals there were the discharged prisoners, all of whom, as a matter of course, returned, without any pretence of repentance or reform, to their old friends and their old habits. What else could they do? Those who were discharged from prison after a first sentence quickly found that their loss of character had driven them from any chance of honest employment, and they were fain to fall back upon the acquaintances they had made in Newgate and to join the criminal classes, which, to do them justice, were always open to all comers, who were welcomed and received into the fraternity without jealousy, interest, or restriction. There was room for all. Now, about the end of the century there were 700 prisoners discharged every year from Newgate alone, and about 500 from the hulks of Woolwich, Portsmouth, and Langston Harbour.

Among the causes which contributed to the spread of vice, Colquhoun mentions first the improvidence and the luxurious habits of the people. They did not know, he says, what the commonest thrift meant. When they had money they spent it in expensive food—such as oysters, crab, lobster, pickled salmon, and the like—or in drink. They did not hesitate, for the sake of a hot supper, to pawn everything they had. Of course they eagerly took shares in the lottery, they thronged all the places of amusement, they passed their evenings at the public-house, they were great gamblers, and addicted to every kind of "sport," such as dog-fighting, cock-fighting, boxing, and the like. There is not a word as to

reading—first, because these people did not know how to read, and next, because if they did, there was nothing for them to read. All this, however, is general talk, and could, with some modifications, stand for the criminal class of this day as well. Happily it could no longer stand as true for the working class as a body.

A criminal class, however, requires organisation; there must be confederacy; no one would steal unless there were people to buy his stolen goods. Since many branches of a criminal's work require a partner, or even a gang, there must be places where they can meet and concert measures; and since in every trade there must be the means of discussion and mutual understanding, some place must be found ready and fit for that purpose. These places were found in the taverns and beershops, of which there were within the Bills of Mortality 5204, or one for every 200 people, or one for every fifty men. No care, Colquhoun says, was taken concerning the character of the landlord, though it was notorious that within these houses were concocted all the burglaries and shop robberies and highway robberies of the time, and though it was perfectly well known and notorious that the landlord allowed the discussion and the planning of these robberies to be openly carried on within his walls and before his face. It was also notorious that coiners of base money repaired to these houses to sell and to exchange their coin; that card sharpers brought their victims to these houses; and that the landlords even allowed the establishment at their houses of clubs for apprentices, whither lads were encouraged to bring goods stolen from their masters, and to drink and gamble.

Even worse than the public-houses, which are not accused of buying stolen goods, were the old iron and rag shops. These shops were established in every back and bye street near the streets of respectable houses. They pretended to buy only the waste and the broken stuff, the old pots and pans, the grease, and all the rubbish which the servants saved from the dustbin. Under this pretence, they were universally, and without exception, and notoriously, receivers of stolen goods. Not only did they receive, but they tempted.

The stable boys, the old clo'men, the chimney sweeps, the dustmen, the porters, the apprentices, the journeymen, whoever found admission to a respectable house on any pretence whatever, were tempted to steal whatever they could lay their hands upon. The receiving shop was close at hand, round the corner; the things could be conveyed away easily and safely. Was it silver? Was it pewter? The receiver had his melting-pot ready. The pewter pots of the tavern went into the pot as soon as they arrived. In a few minutes they were a lump of metal: it was impossible to prove the theft. So with silver spoons, silver cups, and plate of all kinds. So with copper, lead, and other metals. Colquhoun actually estimates that the sum of £710,000 was lost every year by petty thefts

in London by the aid of these rag and old iron shops, of which there were, in 1796, no fewer than 3000, more than half the whole number of taverns.

He next considers the case of the shipping, and the robberies connected with cargoes.

There were no receiving docks at that time, but every ship was loaded and discharged her cargo in mid stream by means of lighters, barges, and boats. The river was then crowded with boats, and every ship had her attendant barges alongside, so that it was extremely difficult among the crowd of boats to know whether one was waiting for passengers or for cargo, or was only hanging about for purposes of plunder. The men who came aboard for unlading were called lumpers, and were systematic robbers. They had small sacks behind their aprons which they filled with rum; if the cargo was not rum, but sugar, they converted these sacks into pockets and filled them; they filled their hats; they went ashore three times a day, and always in a body and always together; and if a Trinity officer was suspicious and attempted a search, he was hustled and knocked about. From the ship they went straight to one of the numerous receiving-houses by the riverside, where they unloaded themselves and sold their plunder. Sometimes, when the tide allowed, they threw overboard bags of coffee or of tea, packets of spice, bladders full of rum, kegs of tamarinds, to be picked up by the mudlarks in their service; sometimes they simply tossed the things into boats prowling about for the purpose. Nor were the depredations confined to the ships; there were men whose business it was to lurk about on every public wharf to pick up what they could; these were generally discharged criminals, who could find no employment and no master, and wanted none, so long as they could hang about pretending to wait for employment and picking up odds and ends.

The whole riverside from St. Katherine's to Limehouse was populated with these robbers, with the public-houses where they spent their ungodly gains and the receiving-shops which bought their goods. It was not, of course, a population so numerous as at present, but there were a good many between the Tower and Poplar.

Few or many, the whole community was depraved. There was nothing, not even the most costly goods, which could not be obtained on the riverside for a mere trifle, and those who were not robbers lived and flourished on the robberies. Respectable people, however, would not venture among these fearful slums. Colquhoun estimates the yearly loss on account of depredations on the river at half a million sterling.

He next considers the thefts in the dockyards on the Thames alone, viz. Deptford, Chatham, and Sheerness. It would seem as if the Government encouraged robbery. They laid in stores on a colossal scale; the storehouses were reported to be too small; additions were made; the old stores were forgotten



and either became ruined or were stolen. It is almost incredible that the authorities actually allowed the shipwrights to carry away every day a bundle of chips. In order to secure these chips the men would commonly hack the most valuable wood to pieces; they also carried away copper bolt-heads and copper nails hidden among these chips.

There were two kinds of fraud committed in the dockyards: those by the clerks and storekeepers in their returns of stores as unserviceable; and the sale of such old stores, by which excellent stores were often sold for a song, the clerk standing in with the contractor who bought them up. The clerks, in those days, stood in with every contract. This was iniquity on so large a scale that it was called the custom and rule of the office. The petty kind, however, in which every man was engaged, went on every day and all day long, and was far more detrimental to the service.

Consider what quantities of things go to the furnishing of a ship, and how many of these things there are that may be easily stolen. A ship wants (Colquhoun, p. 75)—

"Cordage, bolts of canvas, sails, bunting, twine of all sorts, fearnought and kersey, leather and hides, old and new copper, locks, hinges, and bolts, copper bolts and nails in immense quantities, bar-iron, old iron, lead and solder, ship's planks, oars, timber of small sizes, blocks, quarter-stuff, candles, tallow, oil, paint, pitch, tar, turpentine, varnish, rosin, beer and water casks, iron hoops, biscuit bags, beer, bread, rum, oil, vinegar, butter, cheese, beef, pork."

So open was the robbery, so notorious was it, that vessels in the coasting trade, and even foreign vessels, were accustomed to touch at Portsmouth and Plymouth in order to purchase cheap stores of the dealers, who could sell them far more cheaply than at Bristol or Newcastle, because they got the stores for next to nothing. These honest dealers employed men who were constantly engaged in untwisting cordage for the purpose of removing the King's "stran," *i.e.* the coloured thread which marked it as belonging to the dockyard; or in knocking the King's broad arrow out of copper bolts, nails, bar-iron, and other things. "It would scarcely be credited," Colquhoun writes, "to what an enormous extent the sale of cheap cordage, sail-cloth, and other naval articles is carried, in supplying coasting vessels and smaller craft upon the river Thames, which has been plundered in a variety of ways." The depredations committed in the dockyards amounted, he reckoned, to £300,000 a year. The depredations committed by all kinds of robberies, he estimates at £1,500,000 a year.

Colquhoun next considers the coinage of base money. At this time the trade of false coiners was very flourishing. Forty or fifty mints were in full occupation in London alone. One coiner confessed that in seven years he had coined counterfeit half-crowns to the extent of £200,000 of nominal value. The persons chiefly engaged in circulating the base money were Jews, especially Jew

boys. Indeed, one hopes that Colquhoun was prejudiced, for he constantly charges Jews with being accessories or receivers or circulators. It must be owned that either the Jews are greatly changed of late years or the old charges against them were unfounded. No one at the present time associates Jews, as a class, with encouraging or stimulating or teaching thieves; or of making their livelihood, as a class, by keeping receiving-houses; or with being more dishonest, even at the worst, than their neighbours. The losses by coining base money and by general forgeries and swindling Colquhoun sets down at £270,000.

"The trade of dealing in base money acquires its greatest vigour in the month of March, for then the lotteries are over, when swindlers, gamblers, pretended dealers in horses, travellers with E. O. tables, and hawkers and pedlars, go into the country, carrying with them considerable quantities of counterfeit silver and copper coin, by which they are enabled in a greater degree to extend the circulation by cheating and defrauding ignorant country people.

It very seldom happens, on account of the great demand (especially of late years), that the dealers have ever any considerable stock on hand. The base money is no sooner finished, than it is packed up and sent to customers in town or country, and with such rapidity has it been fabricated, on occasions of pressing emergency, that a single dealer has been known to procure from the coiners, who worked for him, from £300 to £500 for country orders in the course of a week. The lower ranks among the Irish and the Jews are the chief supporters of the trade of circulating base money in London; there is said to be scarce a low Irish labourer who does not exchange his week's wages for base money, taking a mixture of shillings, sixpences, and copper.

The Jews principally confine themselves to the coinage and circulation of copper; while the Irish women are the chief utterers and colourers of base silver. A vast number of these low women have acquired the mischievous art of colouring the bad shillings and sixpences, which they purchase from the Jews, who (as has been already mentioned) obtain these by employing boys to cry bad shillings, and by making the purchase wholly with counterfeit half-pence.

They indeed deal largely in foreign coins, counterfeited in this country, having been the chief medium by which Louis d'ors, as well as various silver coins, made of base metal, have been sent out of this country. It is through the same channel that the Sequins of Turkey were coined, and also the Pagodas of India. This last coin has been made for a considerable number of years by one individual only, who sells them at 5d. each, while the dealers, by disposing of them afterwards at 2s. 3d. and 5s., find it a very lucrative branch of trade, although unquestionably a very fraudulent one."

The total loss from ordinary robberies, river robberies, dockyard robberies, and false coins, he considers worth £2,000,000 a year to London alone.

This being the very serious and even dangerous condition of London at the close of the last century,—a vast criminal population, *i.e.* a population living entirely by theft and robbery; thousands of working men utterly demoralised by the ease and safety of robbery; temptations held out to every apprentice and servant to prey upon his master; thousands of receiving-houses; base coin flooding the market,—let us inquire into the administration of the law and the measures taken for the suppression of crime.

It was at the outset remarked that persons suffered small robberies without complaint because they disliked the trouble and annoyance of prosecution. Of course this cowardly shrinking from responsibility was a direct encouragement to

criminals. Until the year 1752 persons who were robbed generally advertised in the papers a reward to any one who would return the stolen property and no questions asked. In that year an Act was passed inflicting a fine of £50 on any person who should advertise such a reward for the return of stolen goods. It was next lamented that even the office of constable had lost its old responsibility. It is, of course, the vital interest of the whole community that such an office should be invested with all the dignity as well as all the authority that can be conferred upon it. How far the dignity of the office was maintained the following rules of rewards will clearly show. The constable, in fact, was turned into an informer. Nominally, in order to stimulate the constables and peace officers, rewards were offered for apprehending and prosecuting offenders, *e.g.*—

For highway robbery, a reward in money of £40, together with the horse, arms, furniture, and money of the robber, and a Tyburn ticket.

False coinage, for silver and gold, a reward of £40.

For copper, a reward of £10.

For shop-lifting and stealing from warehouse or stable, a Tyburn ticket. The Tyburn ticket was a certificate exempting the person who held it from all offices in his parish or ward. The ticket was sold by the first holder, but could not be sold afterwards. It generally fetched from £25 to £30. Did it not occur to the inventor of the Tyburn ticket that to grant such an exemption struck at the root of all government by the people?

For burglary a reward of £40 and a Tyburn ticket; for housebreaking, the same.

For horse-stealing, a Tyburn ticket.

For compounding felony, £40.

For stealing cattle, sheep, or lambs, £10.

For returning from transportation, £20.

The practical working of the system of rewards is illustrated in the practices of the thief-taker already recorded. Criminals were enlisted by him, encouraged, promised impunity in crime, and finally, when they had enjoyed a long enough rope, arrested, tried, and hanged for the sake of the informer's reward. Returned convicts, for whose arrest £20 was offered, were left to follow their former line of life—the only one open to them—which very quickly qualified them to bestow upon the informer the larger reward, *viz.*, £40 and a Tyburn ticket. Moreover, it became obviously the interest of the informer to pass over the lesser crimes, and even to encourage them, because they led the offender on to the greater crimes and the greater reward. Another bad point about this system of rewards was that it deprived the witness of credit, since everybody knew that he had a large pecuniary interest in the conviction of the prisoner.

Another illustration of the working of the rewards system is the following



story. It has been often presented with various points of difference. My version is taken from Harrison's *History of London* (1770):—

"At the Sessions held in the Old Bailey in the month of February, four thief-takers, viz., Macdaniel, Berry, Salmon, and Egan, were tried for swearing falsely (as it appeared they had frequently done before, and from whose evidence several innocent people had suffered) against a lad whom they accused of robbery, for the sake of obtaining the reward allowed by Act of Parliament on the conviction of capital offenders; and being found guilty, they received sentence, each to stand twice in the pillory (two at a time), to be imprisoned seven years in Newgate, to find security of a £1000 each for their good behaviour for seven years, and to pay a fine. Berry and Macdaniel underwent the first part of their sentence on the 5th of March in Holbourn, and were severely treated by the populace; the latter received a terrible wound in his forehead with a stone, and Berry with great difficulty survived it. On the 8th of the same month Egan and Salmon stood in the pillory in the centre of Smithfield; and, notwithstanding the attendance of the sheriffs, with a prodigious number of constables, yet so incensed were the populace against these miscreants, that the officers, instead of being able to protect the criminals, were obliged to retreat for their own safety. Egan, after being a short time in the pillory, received a wound in his head that killed him, and he hung by the neck, a shocking spectacle, till the expiration of the hour. Salmon was so dreadfully bruised and maimed, that he appeared as if dead, and was a considerable time before he recovered from this severe though just treatment; it was thought proper not to repeat this part of their sentence. Berry and Salmon, therefore, died in Newgate, and Macdaniel, after a course of years, was sent abroad. Such was the punishment, and such the end, of these unparalleled monsters."

Returning to the end of the century, Colquhoun gives a tabulated list of cases tried at the Old Bailey from September 1790 to September 1791. It is as follows:—

6 for treasons in making false money—	
A reward in money on conviction, amounting for each to £40, in all to	£240
81 highway robberies—	
A reward (besides the highwayman's property) amounting, in each case, to £40, in all to	£3240
10 stealing cattle and sheep—	
A reward in money of £10, amounting in all to	£100
2 returning from transportation—	
A reward in money of £20, amounting in all to	£40
Total	£3620

193 prisoners tried for offences entitling the apprehenders to rewards on conviction, and 895 also tried, for which no rewards or gratuities are allowed to officers for their trouble and risk in apprehending, viz:—

10 for murders	1 for sodomy
4 " arson	7 " bigamy
10 " forgeries	6 " perjuries
2 " piracies	6 " conspiracies
4 " rapes	3 " fraudulent bankrupts
642 " Grand larcenies	13 " for shop-lifting under 5s.
32 " stealing privately from persons	16 " ripping and stealing lead
9 " dealing in and uttering base money	12 " stealing pewter pots

22 for stealing from furnished lodgings	7 for obstructing revenue officers
1 „ stealing letters	1 „ wounding a horse maliciously
1 „ stealing a child	38 „ assaults
22 „ receiving stolen goods	
15 „ frauds	1088 total
9 „ misdemeanours	445 prisoners from the late sheriffs
1 „ assaulting and cutting clothes	
1 „ smuggling	1533 aggregate number

Disposed of as follows, viz. :—

Executed	32
Died	25
Sent to the Hulks	2
Transported	517
Removed to other prisons	95
Transferred to the new sheriffs	151
Discharged upon the town	711
	<u>1533</u>

At the end of the eighteenth century, the officers of justice, parochial and stipendiary, who were appointed to watch over the police of London and its environs, for keeping the peace, and in detecting and apprehending offenders, amounted to 1000 persons under five separate jurisdictions, as follows :—

1. London—

The City of London in 25 wards exclusive of Bridge Without—

City marshals	2
Marshals men	6
Beadles	36
Principals	98
Substitutes	145
Extra officers	32
	<u>319</u>

2. Westminster—

The City and Liberty of Westminster, 9 parishes and 2 precincts—

High constable	1
Parochial constables	70
	<u>71</u>

3. Middlesex—

The Division of Holborn, in Middlesex, joining in the metropolis, in 13 parishes, liberties, and manors—

High constable	1
Parochial constables	78
	<u>79</u>

The Division of Finsbury in Middlesex, joining in the metropolis, 4 parishes, and 1 liberty—

High constable	1
Parochial constables	68
	<u>69</u>

The Division called the Tower Hamlets, including the eastern part of the metropolis, and comprehending 10 parishes, 4 hamlets, 1 liberty, and 2 precincts—	
High constable . . . . .	1
Parochial constables . . . . .	217
	— 218
4. Tower Liberty—	
The Liberty of the Tower of London being a separate jurisdiction—	
High constable . . . . .	1
Constables and headboroughs . . . . .	16
	— 17
The Division of Kensington, Chelsea, etc., comprehending 2 parishes and 3 hamlets—	
High constable . . . . .	1
Parochial constables . . . . .	21
	— 22
5. Surrey—	
The Borough of Southwark, etc., comprehending 9 parishes—	
High constable . . . . .	1
Constables . . . . .	87
	— 88
Total parochial officers . . . . .	
	883

To which are to be added the stipendiary officers of police, specially appointed for the purpose of preventing crimes and of detecting and apprehending offenders—

1. The establishment at Bow Street, under the direction of the three magistrates presiding at that office, viz., constables and (under the direction of W. Addington, Esq.), patrols for the roads . . . . .		75
2. The establishment of seven public offices by the Act of the 32nd of his present Majesty, under the direction of three magistrates at each office, viz. :—		
Public office, Queen Square, constables . . . . .		6
„ Marlborough Street „ . . . . .		6
„ Hatton Garden „ . . . . .		6
„ Worship Street „ . . . . .		6
„ Whitechapel „ . . . . .		6
„ Shadwell „ . . . . .		6
„ Union Hall, Southwark „ . . . . .		6
		— 117
Total civil force in the metropolis . . . . .		1000

Of these officers only fifty (exclusive of thirty-two extra officers in the City of London, and sixty-seven patrols at Bow Street) were stipendiary officers, particularly pledged to devote their whole time to the service of the public; and Colquhoun asks whether so small a number was sufficient for the purpose of watching and detecting the hordes of villains who infest the metropolis?

With this statement may be compared the table of ward officers compiled by Maitland :—



# POLICE AND JUSTICE

517

An account of the numbers of Aldermen, Common Councilmen, Constables, Scavengers, Inquest, Beadles, and Watchmen belonging to the several wards of the City, together with the several sums annually paid the Rakers, for cleansing the streets and carrying away the dust, with the sum yearly raised for paying the Beadles and Watch, and the sum total paid for lighting the City and liberties thereof, etc.

Wards.	Aldermen.	Common Councilmen.	Scavengers.	Inquest.	Beadles.	Watchmen.	Lamp-lighters.	Rakers.	
Aldersgate . . . . .	1	8	8	8	14	1	25	184	£ 156 0
Aldgate . . . . .	1	6	6	7	19	1	31	201	219 0
Bassishaw . . . . .	1	4	4	4	17	1	16	5	24 0
Billingsgate . . . . .	1	10	11	6	13	2	20	122	96 0
Bishopsgate . . . . .	1	14	7	9	13	2	49	400	392 0
Bread Street . . . . .	1	12	13	12	13	1	12	94	60 0
Bridge . . . . .	1	15	14	14	15	1	22	112	40 0
Broad Street . . . . .	1	10	10	8	13	1	38	264	169 0
Candlewick . . . . .	1	8	7	6	13	1	16	70	40 0
Castle-Baynard . . . . .	1	10	10	7	14	1	24	180	90 0
Cheap . . . . .	1	12	18	13	17	1	20	126	100 0
Coleman Street . . . . .	1	6	6	6	13	1	24	183	120 0
Cordwainer . . . . .	1	8	8	8	14	1	16	93	40 0
Cornhill . . . . .	1	6	4	4	10	1	18	72	55 0
Cripplegate . . . . .	1	12	13	16	34	2	54	376	301 0
Dowgate . . . . .	1	8	8	5	14	1	16	129	50 0
Farringdon Within . . . . .	1	17	18	19	17	2	49	315	184 0
Farringdon Without . . . . .	1	16	18	17	52	4	89	838	553 0
Langbourn . . . . .	1	10	12	11	16	1	23	168	147 10
Lime Street . . . . .	1	4	4	4	12	1	10	122	50 0
Portoken . . . . .	1	5	5	5	22	1	28	191	248 0
Queenhithe . . . . .	1	6	9	8	13	1	10	160	60 0
Tower . . . . .	1	12	12	12	13	1	32	221	184 0
Vintry . . . . .	1	9	9	3	13	1	10	127	50 0
Wallbrook . . . . .	1	8	7	6	13	1	18	88	37 0
Bridge Without . . . . .	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 0
Sum Total . . . . .	26	236	241	218	423	32	672	4809	£ 3466 10

To these must be added the list for the parishes, precincts, and liberties within the City, but without its jurisdiction:—

An account of the number of Officers, viz., Headboroughs, Constables, Scavengers, Beadles, and Watchmen in the several Parishes, Precincts, and Liberties within the City of London and Liberty thereof, but without its jurisdiction, with the annual sum paid by each to the Raker.

Parishes.	Headboroughs.	Constables.	Scavengers.	Beadles.	Watchmen.	Rakers.
St. Bartholomew the Great . . . . .	0	3	3	1	6	40
St. Bartholomew the Less . . . . .	0	1	1	1	3	19
Bridewell Precinct . . . . .	0	0	0	1	2	18
St. Catherine's Tower . . . . .	2	2	2	1	4	50
East Smithfield Liberty . . . . .	5	2	6	2	8	160
St. James's, Duke's Place . . . . .	2	1	1	0	6	22
St. Martin's-le-Grand . . . . .	6	1	1	0	4	22
Old Artillery Ground . . . . .	2	1	1	1	3	28
St. Peter ad Vincula Wt. . . . .	1	2	1	1	4	18
Trinity Minorities . . . . .	1	1	1	1	3	14
White Friars Precinct . . . . .	0	2	2	0	0	24
Sum Total . . . . .	19	16	19	9	43	415

Also the number of churchwardens, etc.—

Churchwardens.	Overseers of the Poor.	Paid on Account of the Church.	Paid on Account of the Poor.	Number of Houses.	Workhouses.
220	63	£17,303 7 11	£33,568 16 8	24,260	18

The total number of ward and precinct officers, etc.—

Aldermen.	Common Councilmen.	Headboroughs.	Constables.	Scavengers.	Inquest.	Beadles.	Watchmen.	Paid the Rakers.
26	236	19	257	237	423	41	715	£3881 19 0

The night watchmen were paid at the rate of 8s. to 10s. a week. They were sometimes quite advanced in years and appointed to the office with the view of keeping them out of the workhouse; they were utterly unable to cope with the villainy of the time; they received bribes for letting disorderly persons go; they only showed activity on arresting unfortunate women who could not pay for their connivance. Watchmen were stationed at various points. The parochial constable who attended all night long to receive disorderly persons and criminals at the watchhouse has been mentioned. Here also were kept the names and addresses of the turncocks and the places where the fire engines were kept.

The police force of the metropolis, viz., the peace officers, watchmen, and patrols, made up an aggregate of 3044 men. There were 270 Justices of the Peace, not counting 700 belonging to the County of Middlesex. But of actual efficient magistrates there were only the twenty-six aldermen of the City and twenty-four stipendiary magistrates, who sat in their courts at Queen Square, Westminster, Great Marlborough Street, Hatton Garden, Worship Street, Whitechapel, Shadwell, and Southwark, and Bow Street.

The higher and more atrocious offences committed in London and Middlesex were tried at the Old Bailey. There were also Quarter Sessions for the trial of smaller offences at Guildhall, Clerkenwell, Well Close Square, and in certain towns in Surrey.

The following gives a summary view of all the prisoners tried in London during the year 1765. It will be observed that although sixty-one were sentenced to death, only nineteen actually suffered :—

No. of Prisoners Punished and Disposed of.														No. of Prisoners Discharged from the Eight Gaols in One Year.									
Names of Prisons.	Died.	Guilty of Death.	Transportation.	Sent to Newgate.	In Bridewell Hosp.	House of Correction in Middlesex.	Tothill Fields, Bridewell.	Sent to Surrey Gaols.	Sent to Philanthropic and Marine Society.	Sent to Army and Navy.	Passed to Parishes.	Sent to Hospitals.	Total.	Discharged for Want of Proof.	Discharged by Proclamation and Gaol Delivery.	Discharged by Acquittals.	Discharged after being Whipped.	Discharged after being Fined.	Discharged after suffering Imprisonment.	Apprentices Discharged.	Offenders Bailed out of Prison.	Discharged by Pardons.	Total Discharged.
Newgate	7	51	153	85	...	54	...	20	...	39	...	...	409	...	134	272	12	11	20	...	...	129	578
Poultry Compter	...	...	...	...	334	...	...	...	10	44	72	...	460	199	...	...	...	...	...	...	27	...	226
Giltspur Compter	...	...	...	...	249	...	...	...	...	75	125	44	493	287	10	10	...	45	11	...	114	...	477
Bridewell Hospital	4	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	835	44	883	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
New Prison, Clerkenwell	5	...	3	...	...	...	...	...	...	58	...	...	66	237	170	35	9	...	9	...	127	...	587
House of Correction in Cold Bath Fields	4	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	128	...	132	568	231	60	...	...	353	111	...	...	1323
Tothill Fields, Bridewell	2	...	7	...	...	...	37	...	...	...	122	26	194	253	274	6	1	...	27	...	154	...	715
New Gaol, Southwark	...	10	11	...	...	...	...	16	...	...	...	1	38	130	74	35	2	...	28	...	...	...	269
Totals	22	61	174	85	583	54	37	36	10	216	1282	115	2675	1674	893	418	24	56	697	149	422	129	4462
19 Executed 106 Transported.																							

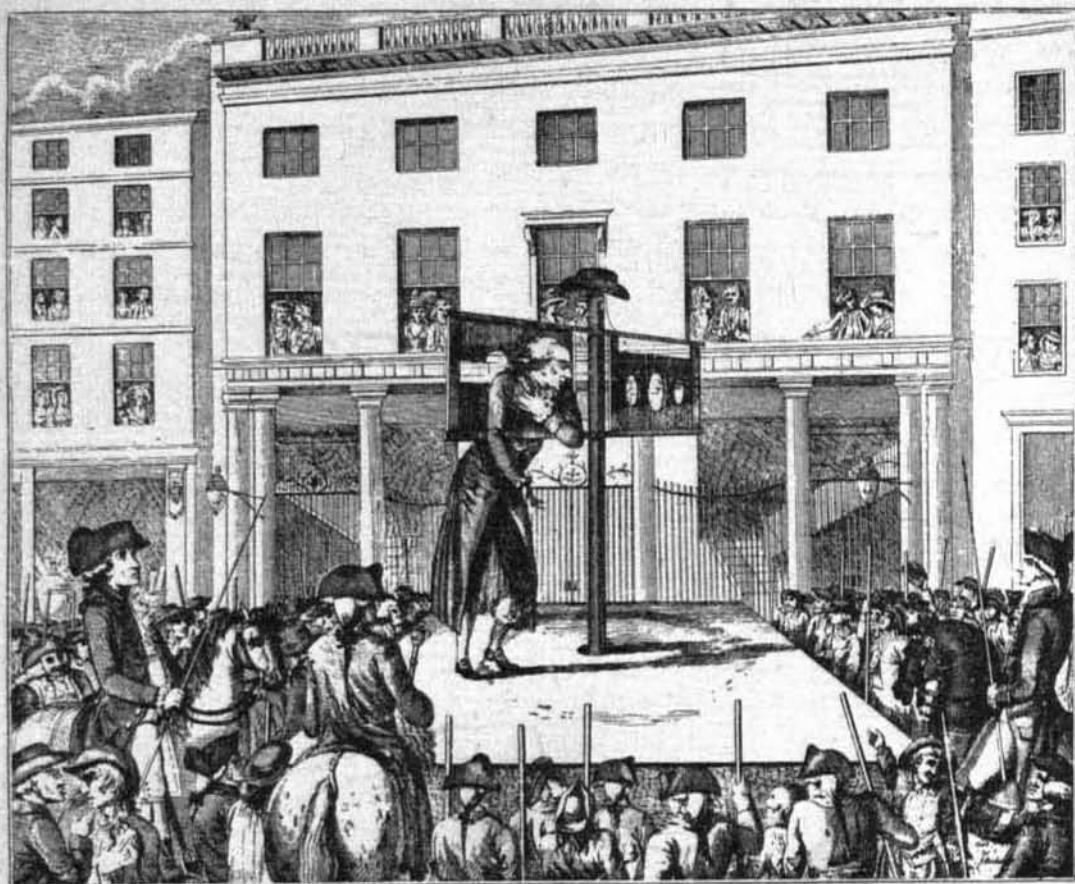
The code of punishment was incredibly severe. While, however, the old barbarities of slitting the nose, cutting off the ears, branding in the hand, burning alive, and the ducking-stool, had been discontinued, yet the savage nature of the law is shown in the extraordinary list of offences for which the judge was ordered to pronounce sentence of death. They were as follows:—

Murder; treason; coining money; arson; rape; sodomy; piracy; forgery; destroying ships or setting them on fire; bankrupts not answering or concealing their effects; burglary; highway robbery; house-breaking; privately stealing, or picking pockets above 1s.; shop-lifting above 5s.; stealing bonds, bills, or bills from letters; stealing bank-notes or bills from letters; stealing above 40s. in any house; stealing above 40s. on a river; stealing linen, etc., from bleaching-grounds; maiming cattle; shooting at a Revenue Officer; pulling down houses, churches, etc.; breaking down a fish-pond where fish may be lost; cutting down trees in an avenue, garden, etc.; cutting down river or sea banks; cutting hop binds; setting fire to corn or coal mines; taking reward for helping another to conceal stolen goods; returning from transportation; stabbing a person unarmed if he die in six months; concealing the death of a bastard child; maliciously maiming or disfiguring any person; sending threatening letters; riots by twelve or more, and not dispersing in one hour after proclamation; accessories to felonies deemed capital; stealing woollen cloths from tenter-grounds; stealing from a ship



in distress ; stealing ore from black lead mines ; stealing horses, cattle, or sheep ; servants purloining their masters' goods, value 40s. ; bail, personating ; escape, breaking prison ; privy councillors, attempting to kill, etc. ; sacrilege ; smuggling by persons armed, etc. ; robbery of the mail ; turnpikes or bridges destroying.

The offences considered as "single felonies" punishable by transportation whipping, imprisonment, pillory, and hard labour in Houses of Correction, were as follows :—



THE PILLORY

Grand larceny, which comprehends every species of theft above the value of 1s. not otherwise distinguished ; receiving stolen goods ; ripping and stealing lead ; stealing from furnished lodgings ; setting fire to underwood ; stealing letters ; embezzling naval stores ; petty larcenies, or thefts under 1s. ; assaulting with intent to rob ; aliens returning after being ordered out of the kingdom ; stealing fish from a pond or river ; stealing roots, trees, or plants of the value of 5s. ; stealing children with their apparel ; bigamy ; assaulting and cutting, or burning clothes ; coin—counterfeiting the copper coin ; marriage, solemnising clandestinely ; manslaughter ; cutting or stealing timber trees, etc.

Next followed misdemeanours punishable by fine, imprisonment, whipping, and pillory:—

Perjury; frauds; conspiracies; assaults; stealing dead bodies; keepers of bawdy houses and other disorderly houses; offences by persons described in the Vagrant Act, 17 George II.; lottery illegal insurances; gaming of various descriptions; stealing cabbages, turnips, growing; cutting and stealing wood and trees; robbing orchards and gardens; deer stealing; dog stealing; setting fire to a house to defraud the insurance office; uttering base money; selling base money under its denoted value; embezzlements in the woollen, silk, and other manufactures; artificers and servants in various trades, committing offences; combinations and conspiracies for raising the price of wages; smuggling run goods, and other frauds, relative to the Excise and Customs.

These lists are illustrated by a table showing the number, etc., of prisoners tried at the Old Bailey from April 1793 to March 1794 inclusive:—

London, Middlesex, and Westminster.	Persons committed for trial.	Of whom acquitted and discharged.	Persons convicted and their Punishments.								
			Death.	Transporta- tion for 14 years.	Transporta- tion for 7 years.	Whipped and imprisoned.	Imprisoned 6 months and upwards.	Imprisoned 3 months and otherwise disposed of.	Sent to serve the king.	Judgment required.	Total punished.
London Sessions .	199	70	6	1	50	10	29	20	8	5	129
Middlesex and Westminster . .	861	497	62	1	117	38	51	49	30	16	364
	1060	567	68	2	167	48	80	69	38	21	493

In time of war a large proportion of those condemned to death or to transportation obtained pardon, on condition of serving in the army or the navy; a condition frequently evaded on pretence of some bodily infirmity concealed until discharge. The ease and frequency of obtaining pardon produced the worst possible effect. The people in the eighteenth century were unfortunately made to feel that crime was rarely detected—that witnesses could be bought off; that the verdict of the jury was uncertain; that juries refused frequently to convict; and that sentences, however severe, were constantly set aside or altered. In two years, for instance, August 1792 to June 1794, 822 convicts were pardoned. Of these 54 obtained free pardons; 696 were pardoned on condition of serving in the army or navy; and 72 had their sentences remitted. When we read of the severe discipline in the Royal Navy and in the Army, of the frightful and merciless floggings that were daily carried on, we must remember that the ships were constantly receiving on board the sweepings of the prisons—creatures whom nothing could influence but the torture of the cat. Yet, rogues and villains as they were, they could fight, and did. Courage they had; the fighting spirit; so much was left to them after all their degradation. The

eighteenth century criminal was a far better man than his miserable descendant of the present day, who is a sneak and a coward with the spirit crushed out of him by a gaol system which turns a man into a snivelling cur. The great-grandfather of the present criminal was at least a man, a fighting man, sometimes a man of revenge.

The system of transportation was first begun as a form of punishment in the year 1718. Before this there had been many occasions when transportation was employed for political prisoners. Cromwell sent 2000 Scotch prisoners, after Worcester, to the Gold Coast, where they all speedily perished. There were political convicts in Jamaica and Barbadoes; but it was not till 1718 that convicts were sent to Maryland and Virginia. Here some of them, after working out their sentences, became settlers and, one hopes, respectable members of society. The system, indeed, seems to have answered very well in those States. The American War put a stop to it. We then tried the plan of confining the convicts to the Hulks or to Houses of Correction. In the year 1787 was commenced a new form of transportation, to the infant colony of New South Wales and to Norfolk Island, a step which takes us out of the history of London.

It was customary for the residents of a suburban village to subscribe in order to offer rewards for the apprehension and conviction of highway robbers and footpads. As yet it had not occurred to them that the money so expended would have been more usefully devoted to the maintenance of an efficient police. Thus we find the following reward offered by the residents of Islington (*London and Middlesex Notebook*, p. 28):—

“For apprehending and convicting all or any of the persons who shall wilfully set fire to the house or premises of a subscriber, £30.

For apprehending and convicting all or any of the persons who shall commit a burglary or robbery, in the dwelling-house of a subscriber, £30.

For apprehending and convicting all or any of the persons who shall commit a murder on the body of a subscriber, or any of his or her family, £30.

For apprehending and convicting all or any of the persons who shall commit a highway or foot robbery upon the person of a subscriber or his or her family, £20.”

In 1792 a very important reform in the Police was carried into effect. The old “Trading Justices” as they were called, the magistrates who received no salary but made their incomes by the fines they imposed upon delinquents, were abolished. The system itself was bad from the beginning; it became atrocious by the abuses which crept into it and became common. We have seen that the watchmen brought the offender before the constable, and the constable brought him before the magistrate. Now, since the magistrate imposed a fine which he put into his own pocket, the constable naturally thought that he, too, might as well impose a fine, let the person go, and put the fine into his own pocket. Nay, since man



is an observant animal, the watchman drew the same inference with the same result. In fact, every kind of offence could be committed with impunity provided the watchman first, or the constable next, was bribed.

By the new rules the magistrate could impose fines, but could not receive them, as they had to be paid into court, the magistrates taking salaries. The new Police Courts were set up at Queen Square; Great Marlborough Street; Hatton Garden; Worship Street; Lambeth Street, Whitechapel; High Street, Shadwell; and Main Street, Southwark.

The system of giving rewards for the apprehension of criminals was examined by the Committee on the Police of the Metropolis, and their report was ordered to be printed on the 8th of July 1817.

From this we learn that the system of rewards was begun by an Act of William and Mary, by which any person who should apprehend a robber, and should prosecute him to conviction, was to receive £40 reward. By the 6th and 7th William III., the same reward was offered for the apprehension and conviction of any persons engaged in counterfeiting and clipping the coin of the realm. By the 5th Anne the same reward was offered for the apprehension and conviction of a burglar.

By the 14th George II., cap. 6, £10 was offered for the conviction of every sheepstealer, etc. By the 15th George II., cap. 28, the reward of £40 for counterfeiting gold and silver coin was extended to include £10 for counterfeiting copper coin. Both these rewards are mentioned by Colquhoun as being then (1796) still in force. The total annual sum paid in rewards rose rapidly in amount; we have seen that in 1791 it was £3620; in 1798, they amounted in all to £7770; in 1815, to £18,000.

There was the additional reward of the "Tyburn Ticket," of which mention has been already made. The Committee strongly recommended the abolition of this reward. Evidence was taken and embodied in the Report. One man swore that because the reward for apprehending a beggar was £10 the police officers would give a poor man a penny and then apprehend him for begging. Another and a third and a fourth deposed to hearing police officers commit perjury against a prisoner for the sake of the reward.

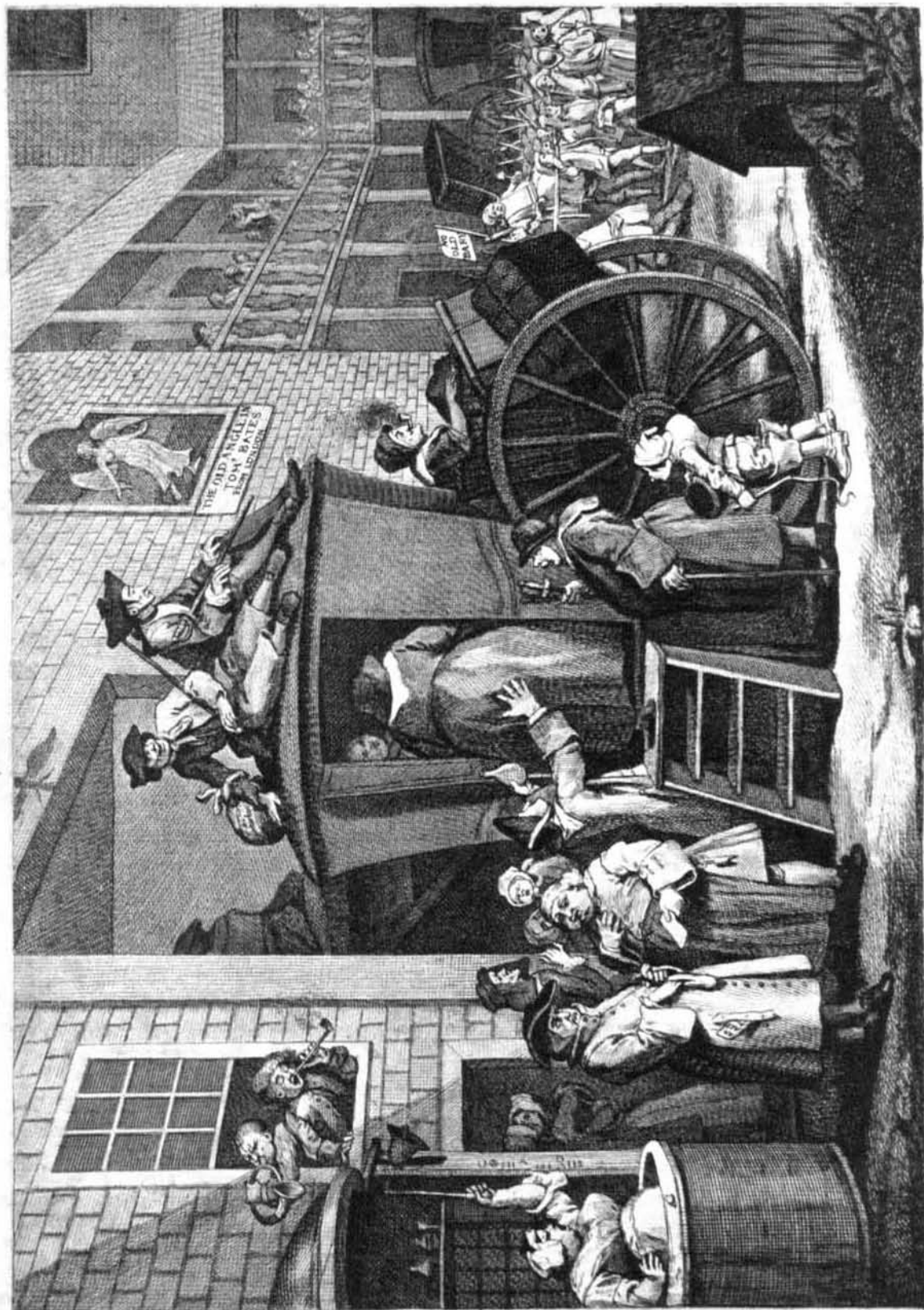
The arrivals in London every day consisted of those who came by coach; those who came by waggon; those who rode; those who came in post-chaises; and those who came by the coasting vessels. The passengers by sailing ship had to disembark and land by means of the Thames watermen. The fleecing of the stranger began with the attentions of the watermen. Once the passengers with their boxes were landed on one of the quays they were tolerably safe, as the quays were in some degree protected from sharks and wolves, water thieves, and land thieves. Outside the quays they found a hackney coach; and so, if a box or two

was not carried off on the way, they arrived, at the expense of a shilling or so overcharge, safely at their destination. If the stranger wanted a guide about London he could find, all along the riverside from London Bridge to Lime House Hole, fellows who undertook to show the sights and guide the visitor. They were mostly old salts, and they have left behind them a reputation for honesty coupled with continual thirst.

Most of the people who came by sailing ship put up at inns or boarding-houses in or beyond the City; about the Minories, Whitechapel, or Wapping. On the other hand the arrivals by any vehicle on wheels had to run the gauntlet of the inn yard and its frequenters. Those yards were infested with gangs of thieves of the most desperate character; these gangs stood by each other; they were organised; they divided the "swag" once in their possession, into as many shares as there were members concerned with the robbery. These shares in the slang of the confederates were called "regulars." The driver of the stage-coach or the waggon, the guard, the grooms and hostlers and stable-boys, the porters,—all were "in it" together. Nay, the landlord of the inn was "in it" too. The fellows who did the active part of the robbery lolled about the inn all day, waking up into activity on hearing the well-known tune upon the horn, with which the guard announced his arrival while yet afar off. Every guard of every coach had his own favourite melody, his private air, well known to everybody, which he played most beautifully. The tune announced the arrival of the coach; informed everybody what coach it was; and warned the thieves to be on the alert. As soon as the passengers had left the vehicle, down came the coachman and climbed into the inside, shutting the door after him, while he searched the pockets and the seats for stray articles left behind. They were his perquisite; no subsequent inquiry after lost property ever recovered things once left behind. Meantime the passengers' luggage lay on the ground waiting for the porters and hackney-coach. Here was the chance for the thieves. One caught up a trunk, shouting "By your leave," as if he was the porter bearing the box to a coach, and made for the gates. At the gates stood two or three of his confederates, to hustle and knock down any one who ran after the thief, who, once outside, was instantly lost in the narrow lanes of the City.

This robbery of luggage went on all day long, always in the same manner; almost always with impunity. No one protected the passenger who, indeed, if he wanted protection, had to depend upon his fists or his club. It was not only shameful in those days not to fight on occasion; it was also shameful to be ignorant of what was called, and was in reality, the noble art of self-defence.

The hackney coachmen in their turn, stood in with the thieves and took their "regulars" when a trunk or a bag was filched from the coach. They also charged as much as they dared over and above their legal fares; and, because they were liable



Price one Shilling.

Designed and Engraved by W. Hogarth.

Published According to Act of Parliament 1747.

A COUNTRY INN YARD

From the engraving by Hogarth.



to be summoned, they always took care in opening their doors to open them as wide as possible so that the passenger should not be able to see the number, which was painted on the outside of the door.

The inn yards were also the haunt of the "smasher." Everybody was a smasher. The most active in the smashing business was the noble company of "caddees," a word which we have abbreviated to "cad." These fellows professed to be hanging about for sixpenny jobs, messages, and errands; they also touted for the inns, receiving a shilling for every customer or lodger that they brought. But it was perfectly well known that the chief part of their business was that of smashing. They not only passed off bad money for good, and forged notes for good notes, but they sold their bad money to the hackney coachmen, to the porters, to the guards, to everybody. There were many ways of smashing; if, for instance, a half-crown was given to a coachman he generally had a false one in his hand and presented it, respectfully regretting that his Honour had given him a bad half-crown.

The picking of pockets was reduced to a science. The pickpockets mixed in every crowd; round the print-shops; wherever there was any show or exhibition of goods (*Picture of London*, John Bee, p. 53):—

"If a horse tumbles or a woman faints, away they run, to increase the crowd and the confusion; they create a bustle, and try over the pockets of unsuspecting persons; till, at length, having marked out one, the accomplice shoves him hard up against other persons (usually some of the gang), who naturally repress the intrusion. Thus wedged in, they next hit him on the head with a stick, when he, to save his hat, or to resent the insult, lifts up his arms; a third or a fourth, still farther behind, gives one more shove, rams his flat hand hard against the belly of the person marked out to be done, and pulls out his watch. If it be his pocket-book they are after, they lift up the skirts of his coat, to come at his inside pocket, but, should it lie on his breast, then the rogue, who is next to the victim, seizes his collar behind, and drags until the buttons give way or there is space enough between the coat and the body for the accomplice to thrust in his arm. So situated, it is clear that every other pocket must be liable to a visit, the breeches not excepted. As he in the rear is generally a short man, or a boy, he thrusts in underneath the arms of the accomplices, who make room for him on purpose, and he is thus enabled to pick two or three pockets at leisure, especially in large crowds—such as a boxing match or my Lord Mayor's show."

Another common method was to get up a sham fight, under cover of which to hustle and rob the bystanders.

In every street was the shop where the servants and prentices, as well as the professional criminals, brought what they could steal from their master; the shop which sold things everybody knew to be stolen—silk handkerchiefs with the worked letters picked out; snuff boxes; wigs; hats; lace ruffles; sword-sticks; pocket-books. In every street where stage-coaches and carriages arrived or set out, there were the houses where painted faces showed at all the windows, where the door stood open, and Doll Tearsheet, smiling, invited the country man in, to ruin and destruction; every street had its rogues' den; its smashing mint; its abodes of

cheats, villains, and thief-takers and informers. The police officers were "in it"; they were bribed to shut their eyes; the only security was in showing fight. A little dog roused the tenant when the housebreaker entered by the window; a gun, a sword, a knife, a club drove him out. In the street, even in the busiest thoroughfare, as Ludgate Hill, one might have to fight for watch or purse with club or fists; the very women, the common prostitutes, knew how to handle their fists and could fight, as well as rob. There was a whole vocabulary, apart from the slang Dictionary, of names belonging to the various branches of the rogues' profession. There were, for instance, buffers, caddees, duffers, gaffers, smashers, stashers, nosers, bustlers, kiddies, crimps, bubbles, ring droppers, change ringers, sharpers, smugglers, stags, trippers, divers, grabbers, shoulderers, and a hundred others. The vocabulary is as copious as that of the rogues under good Queen Bess.

The most remarkable point about these rogues in the year, say, 1790 or 1800, was the piety of some of them. One man, for instance, a Roman Catholic, transported for stealing brass wire from his employer—the robbery having been carried on for many years—was a shining example of attention to his religious duties. There was a gang of porters who robbed right and left, and kept a depot for the sale of their goods in Hand Court, Thames Street; after the gang was broken up these men were proved to have been strict and outwardly consistent Christians. Three of them, who were hanged, were members of a Methodist Chapel, and had been "convicted of sin" and converted, long before. Yet they continued in their rogueries; works, we know, may be wholly unconnected with faith.

The lawlessness of the mob is illustrated by the following story from the *Place Collection* :—

"There was a set of miscreants who chose to live on the eastern side of the Tower, near the Mint, and claimed the privilege of being free from arrest for debt. Fellows who fled from their creditors and, as it appears from the trials of ten of them, were mostly thieves and housebreakers. Among them was one, Mr. Saintive, who had been a Justice of the Peace. The new minters, like the old minters in the borough of Southwark, assigned certain limits as a boundary within which civil process should not be served, and any officer who either attempted to some process within the limits, or upon the person of any one who was involved in a mint, was seized and punished.

When it had been determined to seize and punish obnoxious persons, they used to sally out in considerable numbers and with bludgeons, and followed by an immense mob which encouraged them in their iniquity and probably protected them. They seized one man at Wapping, another they took out of a house in Whitechapel, dragged them to the New Mint, tried and punished them according to their own laws. One of these miscreants, who was hanged for robbery, acknowledged that 'during the time he was a minter, no less than twelve bailiffs had been seized, whipt, and underwent the rest of their discipline.'

'They seized upon me,' says one of the bailiffs, 'and carried me along in triumph to the New Mint, with colours flying and violins playing before them.' The discipline is thus described by one of the sufferers, William Jones—'They stript me naked and wore sixpenny worth of rods to the stumps in

whipping me, and every now and then they dipped the rods in sirreverence. I believe I received a thousand lashes. After this they put my clothes on again, and some cried, "Damn him, bring him hither!" whereupon I was hauled to the side of a pit which was about 6 feet long and 3 or 4 broad. It was filled with human excrement and other filth, and over it hung the sign of the hand and tipstaff. They threw me into this pit and ducked me overhead several times."

Let me quote a few cases of prison and of crime:—

The case of Major Bernardi is very strange and unintelligible. He followed the fortunes of James II. and accompanied the fallen king into France; served as a captain under him at the Battle of the Boyne; and at the reduction of Limerick was permitted to go to France or anywhere else. He proposed to settle in Scotland; but the French privateer, in which he embarked, was taken by an English cruiser. He lost his all, and was sent to the Marshalsea, where he remained for some time. On his discharge a plot was discovered, or actually broke out, for the murder of King William. In consequence of this discovery a reward of £1000 was offered for the arrest of the conspirators, among whose names Bernardi found his own.

No one can pretend to prove or even to describe this case, or to ascertain the share, if any, that Bernardi had in the conspiracy—if there was any conspiracy. However, he was apprehended with some others, taken to Newgate, and closely confined in a cell with irons for two years. All this time without trial. After two years these irons were knocked off, and the prisoners were permitted to walk in the press yard. They then petitioned the King's Bench to be either tried or let out on bail. Bernardi himself set forth that by his imprisonment he had lost an estate, which in his absence had been taken by the next-of-kin. The petition was refused. A special Act of Parliament was passed, to which the King gave his assent, for the continuation of their imprisonment.

There may have been suspicions well grounded enough for the arrest of Bernardi; but what justification could there be for an Act of Parliament to continue his imprisonment without trial. It was in 1696 that he was first imprisoned; when Queen Anne succeeded, another Act of Parliament sanctioned the continued imprisonment; when George I. followed, a third Act was passed; when George II. succeeded his father, a fourth was asked for and passed. Why? This unfortunate man, with his companions, was never let out of prison at all. He outlived them; he lived to the age of eighty-two. Privation did not kill him; nor the foul air of the prison; nor the contagion of gaol fever; nor hope deferred. He married; he made the best of the situation. Towards the end of his life a legacy of £300 a year for the support of these hapless prisoners made them all more comfortable. But still, one asks with wonder, Why? In a land where *lettres de cachet* and the bastille were unknown, —Why?



The case of Mrs. Brownrigg's cruelty to her apprentices has become a typical or leading case in the treatment of parish apprentices. It was not, however, alone. I have before me half a dozen cases of similar barbarity. Of these the worst is that of the Metyards.

These two women lived together, being mother and daughter, in Bruton Street, by no means so aristocratic a street as at present. They kept a small haberdasher's shop, and they made silk nets, purses, and mittens. They also took parish prentices, of whom they had five. These five children were treated in the most barbarous manner; they had insufficient food; they were made to work all day long in a tiny room; they were only allowed out once a fortnight; and they were cruelly beaten both by the mother, who was a woman of a fiendish temper, and the daughter. The weakest and most sickly of these children was one Anne Naylor; she, driven to desperation by hunger and ill-treatment, ran away. She was, however, caught, beaten, and treated worse than ever, while the greatest care was taken lest she should run away again.

She did, however, run away again, but was stopped by the milkman and brought back to the house, where she was thrown on a bed, and while the old woman held her down she was beaten about the body by the daughter. They then hauled her upstairs and tied her fast to the door by a rope round her waist, so that she could neither lie down nor sit down. She was kept thus for three days. On the third day she was so feeble that she sank down hanging by the rope round her waist. The children were frightened and called out "Miss Sally! Miss Sally! Nanny does not move." The girl ran up crying that she would soon make her move. Accordingly she beat the poor dead child about the head with the heel of her shoe; but finding that she really did not move, she called her mother.

First they sent the children downstairs; then they took the body into the garret; they left it there for two months; it became then necessary to get it out of the house. The old woman, therefore, carried the body all the way from Bruton Street to Chick Lane, West Smithfield, where there was a gully hole by which the kennel water ran into the Fleet. She intended to throw the body, which she had cut up, through the gully hole, but could not, on account of the grating. She therefore left the remains in the mud before the grating and went home. The body was found one night by the watchman and carried to the workhouse, where the case was put into the hands of the coroner. He supposed that it was a body lately used for dissection by a surgeon, and ordered it to be buried without inquiry. So far, therefore, the murderer seemed safe. Now, although the daughter, was by this time past nineteen years of age, the mother used to beat her as if she had been a child. The daughter, in order to terrify her into milder behaviour, threatened to accuse her mother of murder and to

become evidence against her. This threat rendered their animosities more bitter and their life more miserable.

After some time they took into the house a lodger, one Rooker, a tea dealer. He, observing the daughter was shamefully and cruelly treated, left the house, took another in Hill Street, and carried away the daughter with him, as his mistress or his servant. Probably the former, as she is described as a girl of remarkable personal attractions. They were followed by the old woman, who came every day to abuse Rooker and her daughter, and to create a disturbance. To get her out of the way Rooker took a house in the country but was speedily found out and again assailed by the old woman, who seems to have become mad with ungoverned rage, so that the girl went in terror of her life. At last, thinking that her evidence would be accepted, she communicated to Rooker the whole story of the murder. Rooker wrote down what he had been told, and communicated the facts to the parish of Tottenham High Cross, by which the girl had been put out as apprentice.

The next step was the arrest of the woman and the evidence of two of the girls who had been her apprentices; the daughter was also examined and dismissed. On further evidence, however, she was arrested and taken to the Gatehouse, Westminster. At the trial her mother declared that the girl had had a fit and run away. The daughter related the whole truth, only laying the whole blame upon her mother. The girls, however, showed that she had been as active as her mother in the ill-treatment of the child; finally they were both convicted and sentenced to be hanged.

Even then their hatred towards each other was so great that they had to be separated. The evening before their execution the mother fell into some kind of fit or convulsions, and remained unconscious to the end. The daughter, who was present, took no notice, and continued to talk with a friend who had come to say farewell to her. She continued to the last to declare her innocence.

There are always, in every great town, places by common consent given over to the haunts of criminals. Turnmill Street and the vicinity of Fleet Ditch; the Seven Dials; parts of Westminster; the Mint, Southwark; the eastern side of Tower Hill; have all, in their turn, been notorious as the refuge and residence of criminals. When the executive is strong the herding together of criminals presents the advantage that they can easily be found when they are wanted. The disadvantage is that robberies are concerted and designed with the greater ease when rogues meet together. Among the more notorious of these places in the last century was the tavern called the Red Lion, near Saffron Hill, of which Timbs gives a description which may be quoted as an example of a rogues' haunt:—

"The most notorious house here was that long known as the Red Lion Tavern; but for the century preceding its destruction in 1844, it had been used as a low lodging-house and was the resort of thieves. It was on the north-west side of the Fleet Ditch, a few houses from Saffron Hill. From its remarkable adaptation as a hiding-place, with its various means of escape, it was a strange place. Its dark closets, trap-floors, sliding panels, and secret recesses, rendered it one of the most secure places for robbery and murder. It was here that a chimney sweep, named Jones, who escaped out of Newgate about three years before the destruction of the house, was so securely hidden for about six weeks, that although it was repeatedly searched by the police, he was never discovered until his hiding-place was divulged by one of its inmates. Jones was concealed by parting off a portion of a cellar with brickwork, well besmeared with soot and dirt, to prevent detection. This cell, or den, was about four feet wide by nine in depth; and Jones had food conveyed to him through a small aperture by a brick or two being left out next to the rafters. Part of a butcher's steel was found here, the handle marked, Benjamin Turle, July 19, 1781. It is said to have belonged to a butcher, a man of bad character, who, about that period, or somewhat later, suffered the last penalty of the law. One room, which was used as a chandler's shop, by way of blind, was provided with a trap-door, through which both thief and booty could immediately be lowered to a cellar beneath, and might thence pass by a plank over Fleet Ditch and gain a refuge in some of the alleys inhabited by other "family people," as they are termed, which communicate with Cow-Cross. It was here that a sailor was robbed, and afterwards flung naked through an aperture in the wall into the Fleet, for which crime two men and a woman were transported. A skull and numerous bones were found in the cellars. The wretched place was said to have been the rendezvous of Jonathan Wild, and often the hiding-place of Jack Sheppard and Jerry Abershaw. Many a foul deed had doubtless been there planned and decided on. On one occasion the police had surrounded the house to take a thief, whom they knew to be there, but he made his escape in their actual presence. Another escape was made by a trap-door beneath a bed. In this house a gang of coiners carried on their nefarious work. There was a private still, communicating with the sewer; and in a garret was a secret door which led to the roof of the next house."

Let us attend a sitting of the Court known as the Old Bailey in the year 1730, or thereabouts. This court is held about eight times a year, so that, at the worst, a prisoner committed by a magistrate cannot have more than six weeks to wait before his case comes on. The jury, before the Court commences, are sworn, one after the other, on the filthy binding of a great leather-cased Bible chained to their box—the leather is black with countless lips. They take their seats and wait the arrival of the judges. The witnesses called for the cases down on the list are standing about the doors waiting to give their evidence; they mostly show that unforgiving face which is to be expected of those who have been robbed, and probably kicked, cuffed, hustled, tied up, and perhaps slashed with knives, while their purses and watches were taken from them. The counsel are fluttering papers and talking to each other; the gallery assigned to the general public is crammed with the people who always attend to hear the capital charges—nearly all the cases are capital—and to gaze upon the prisoner with the curiosity naturally attaching to a man who will before long be sentenced to hanging. How does he take it? Snivelling? Like a man? With a laugh? With a white face and trembling limbs? But so far the dock is empty; it is garnished and decorated with sprigs of rue—not at all in honour of the prisoners, but in order to diminish the danger of gaol fever to the



Court ; for the infection of gaol fever is said to be carried about in the clothes, the hair, the very breath of every prisoner brought up from the fetid courts and noisome cells of the prison hard by.

The judges enter in their robes ; the Lord Mayor, the aldermen, and the sheriffs, with the Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas. They take their seats, bowing to the counsel. The clerk calls the name of the first prisoner, who is brought out and placed in the dock. Then the clerk reads the indictment.

In the eighteenth century we are accustomed to see misery and squalor ; they assume worse forms and greater contrasts than will be possible later on. Thus, in a time when men went clean shaven, when some wore wigs and some wore their own hair, most carefully tied back and powdered, the poor wretch in the dock appeared with a three weeks' beard growing over chin and lips ; his long hair, which should have been light, even yellow, hung over his shoulders in lank locks, matted, uncombed, in rats'-tails, filthy ; his face was ghastly white under the dirt which covered most of it ; his lips trembled and his teeth chattered ; his eyes were unnaturally bright. His frame—a strong and stalwart-frame six feet high and three feet broad—shivered and shook ; he caught hold of the spikes in front of him for support. He looked round him as one who, in spite of his bright eyes, really heard and understood nothing.

As for his clothes, they consisted of a shirt, or perhaps it was once a jacket, hanging upon him in rags, and a pair of leathern breeches tied with a thong,—nothing else. The man was stricken with an attack of gaol fever, which made him foolish as well as cold ; his mind was wandering ; he brought into the court with him a most dreadful reek or stench of the place whence he had been taken. It was the feverish breath of the gaol which spoke through him, crying, "This is the air that your prisoners have to breathe. In this they have to live as long as your hangman lets them live. This is the deadly breath of Newgate." As it rolled in invisible waves about the court ; as it crept like a November fog from bench to bench and covered, now the barristers, now the clerks, and lastly the bench, everyone in turn shivered and shuddered. Some smelt at bottles containing vinegar ; some opened the lid of the pomander containing aromatic herbs ; some held a lump of camphor in their hands, which they kept smelling ; some crushed sprigs of rue between their fingers. All recognised that reek and stench for the breath of gaol fever—infectious, mortal ; the wretch whose life was to be taken away by force of law might console himself with the thought that he would not die unavenged ; for the smell of him was charged with pestilence, and those who looked upon him in life to-day might stand beside him in the other world to-morrow, hurried away by the reek of prison.

The rags of the prisoner had been presented to him by the other prisoners ; he had no money for garnish, either for turnkeys or prisoners ; he was therefore thrust into the very worst part of the prison ; he had no money to buy food or drink,

so he was compelled to live on what crumbs came to him from the doles and charities of the prison; he had no bed, no blanket, therefore he lay upon the bare floor; he had no friends outside who could help him—being only a poor forlorn country-bred rogue; the fever had seized him and had most unhappily spared him so far, as if anxious that justice might not be balked of its own, so far as trial at least, and sentence, were concerned. His case attracted no attention, being, indeed, a very common one of highway robbery, and the prisoner did not belong to any of the London gangs, and was in no way distinguished or famous or interesting. Merely a common rogue. He pleaded "Not Guilty." The prisoner was inaudible, in fact he said nothing because he understood nothing. But the turnkey spoke for him. The trial went on. There was no defence. The prisoner seemed to listen stupidly, holding on to the spikes and sometimes reeling for weakness; but he neither heard nor understood; he was quite a common, ignorant man; through the fever and the starvation and misery of prison he had ceased to care for anything; none of the witnesses were cross-examined—how could he examine them? There was no counsel for the defence. Indeed, had there been any counsel, he would not have been allowed to address the jury in defence of the prisoner.

It is hardly credible that this most wonderful disability actually existed, and was only abolished by the Prisoners' Defence Act in the year 1820, within the memory of living men. Sydney Smith it was who first preached against this wicked and cruel law. He pointed out that, while in any court where property was concerned, counsel was heard on both sides, in that court where human life was concerned, counsel were forbidden to speak. He showed how a prisoner, ignorant, unable to speak, unaccustomed to marshal facts, to weigh evidence, or to consider probabilities, was perfectly incapable of defending himself against counsel for the prosecution, whose sole purpose, for his own reputation, was to win the case. Sydney Smith's words were eloquent, but they availed nothing for a time.

In this case the man was wholly inarticulate; he could say nothing; he might have pleaded poverty and destitution and starving children, but the plea would have availed him nothing; he was found guilty; in fact, there was never any doubt about his case at all. The judge put on the black cap. When he came to the words, "That you be hanged by the neck until you are dead—dead—dead"—the turnkey slipped a string over the prisoner's thumb and tightened it, thereby illustrating the meaning of the words, and showing that as he tightened the loop of string over the prisoner's thumb, so should the rope round his neck be tightened at Tyburn Tree.

The prisoner made no sign, shivering and trembling all the time with the fever that consumed him. The judge obeyed the law of the land, but there was another Judge with a more merciful law, who would call that prisoner away by a less shameful death, that very night.

He was succeeded by another fellow—a strapping vigorous young fellow—who

stepped briskly into the dock and brought with him another and a fuller breath of the prison. He was charged with shop-lifting; he had stolen something from a counter, valued at 5s.—a capital offence. However, the jury were unwilling to hang so fine a lad for so small an offence. Therefore, in the teeth of the evidence, they brought in a verdict of "Not Guilty." He stepped down jauntily and made for the door, but the turnkey laid his hands upon him. "Stay," he said, "where are your dues"? "How can I pay your dues? I have no money." "Then you must wait till you can get some. Go back to the prison—pay me my dues. You will stay there till you do." So with a woeful countenance the poor wretch went back to prison. The gates closed upon him; gaol fever very soon carried him off. As for the turnkey, that injured officer never got his dues at all, and the world outside saw no more of that man who was acquitted. I believe that he was in truth a rogue in grain as much as the fellow condemned to die. Yet, being acquitted, surely he ought to have been allowed to go.

This monstrous cruelty was finally stopped by Alderman Brown, Lord Mayor in 1733. His biographer thus relates the Act, which indeed was a notable Act, and worthy of preservation in our records.

"Before we divest him of his office (Lord Mayor, 1733) 'twould be as injurious as anything could be to his memory, not to let him put in his claim, as principal, in an act of mercy, which arose wholly from himself, for which multitudes of miserable wretches have been obliged to him, and have had cause to bless his name, and whilst the state of wickedness in London and Middlesex continues in the like situation it has been in, or is at present, much greater numbers will undoubtedly have reason to bless his name, and remember his conduct upon that account with great thankfulness and gratitude.

This was the well-known regulations of the Sessions house at the Old Bailey, which proceeded from his own just way of thinking and the tender sentiments of a compassionate heart, for the distressed and unhappy. When an accused person was upon trial at the Old Bailey and acquitted, he was obliged to pay the fees of Newgate or to go back for want of money, where many poor souls perished in prison for no other crime perhaps but poverty.

To put a stop to such terrible cruelty, he procured it to be established by order of the Court, an order which, as we are in a Christian country, 'twould be a shame to us, should not prevail all over the kingdom, that when any accused persons were acquitted by their country, they should instantly be discharged in court, without paying any fees upon any account whatever, and it has been strictly adhered to ever since."



## CHAPTER III

### THE LONDON PRISONS

THE condition of the prisons all over Great Britain was proved by Howard to be shameful to the country and incredibly cruel to the prisoners. They lay in noisome cells, on the bare floor, without bedding, without blankets, almost without clothes, without work, without the means of getting work, and almost without food. In some Bridewells (*i.e.* Houses of Correction) there were no allowances for food at all; in others there were allowances of bread alone, and not too much of that. The prisoners were committed to hard labour, but there was no work for them; there were no materials, no tools, no one to put them to work.

Many of the prisons were infected with smallpox; others had gaol fever always lingering about their foul cells and unventilated wards. Gaol fever, indeed, was no new thing. It hovered about our prisons for many centuries, and was a most terrible scourge. In the year 1414 Newgate was relieved of sixty-four prisoners, its keeper, and many turnkeys, by an outbreak of gaol fever. In 1573-1579 a hundred prisoners died of gaol fever in the King's Bench alone. Lord Bacon says that the "most pernicious infection, next the plague, is the smell of a gaol where the prisoners have been long and nastily kept." In 1750, while the fever was raging in Newgate, some of them being brought out for trial, infected the court, so that the Lord Mayor; one of the aldermen, Sir Thomas Abney; the Chief Justice of Common Pleas; Mr. Brown, clerk; Mr. Cox, under sheriff; many of the counsel, jury, and spectators,—all died of the fever.

Deserters apprehended and afterwards taken to their regiments from prison infected the barracks and killed hundreds; sailors put on board ship from prison communicated the disease to the crew. One of the fleets sent to America at the beginning of the war with the States lost 2000 men from this cause. Yet, in spite of the repeated lessons and warnings, nothing was done to check the evil, until Howard pointed out the gravity of the case.

The extortions to which prisoners were subject will be made apparent later on, when I speak of the Fleet Prison. These extortions were practised universally in every prison in the country; they were perhaps a little more shameless, and a